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ABSTRACT

Oakland (California) must expand high-quality, comprehensive early childhood development programs to improve the educational, employment, and life options of low-income children. Research has found that the benefits of participation in Head Start and other high-quality preschool programs include better preparation for school and lower risk of unemployment, early parenthood, and delinquency. However, low-income parents cannot pay for preschool education and publicly-funded programs serve only 18 percent of those eligible. A review of existing programs indicates that the city has a wide range of programs and personnel with the potential to reach all low-income children. Recommendations include the following: (1) form a committee to facilitate the expansion of existing programs and ensure that these programs can provide comprehensive family support services; (2) obtain new Federal, state, and local resources for the Head Start program; (3) coordinate programs offered by the Oakland Unified School District with each other and with other local child development and family resources programs, including private subsidized and private proprietary programs; and (4) establish an "Oakland Birth-to-School Project" to provide comprehensive health, education, and social services to parents, infants, and preschoolers in high-risk neighborhoods. Descriptions of six model programs are included. Statistical data are presented in one table and seven graphs. A description of the research methodology, a discussion of funding sources, and a list of 39 references are appended. (FMW)

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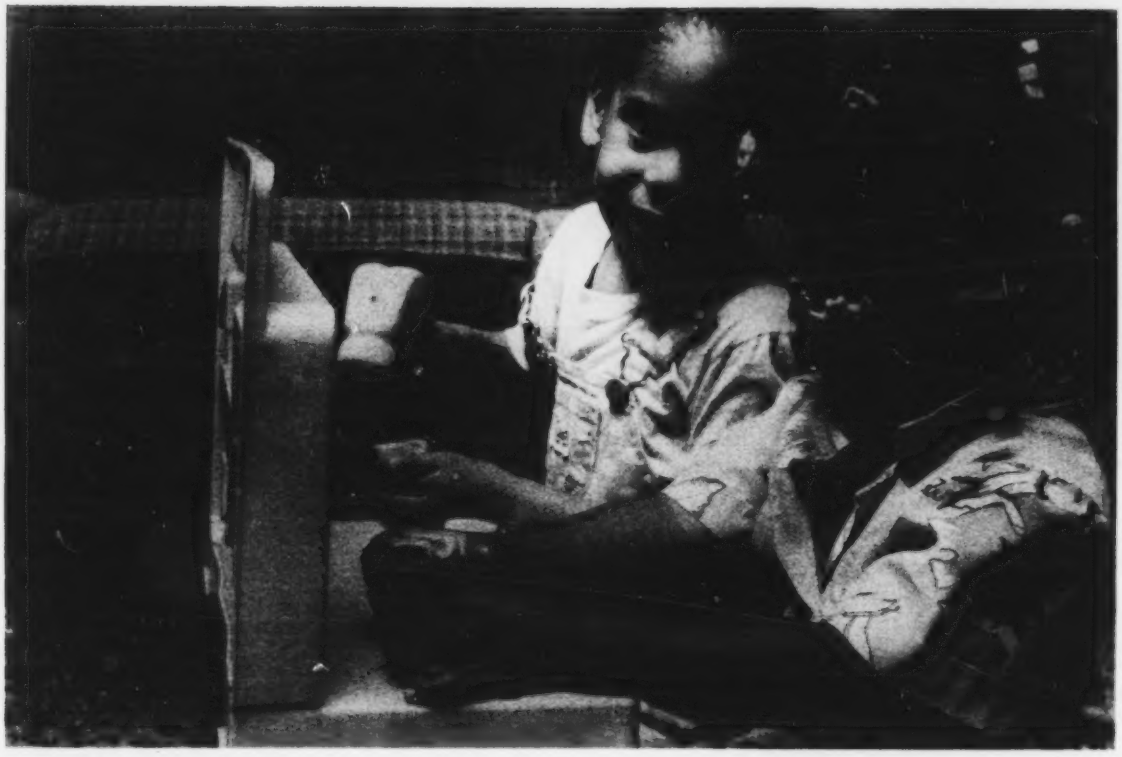

CHANGING THE ODDS:

Expanding Early Childhood Development Programs for Oakland's Low-Income Families

A Blueprint by the Urban Strategies Council
with the Working Group of the Oakland
Early Childhood Development Initiative

Oakland, California
September 1988

MISSION STATEMENT

The Urban Strategies Council is an Oakland-based non-profit resource/policy group.

The mission of the Council is to involve key sectors of the Oakland area community in comprehensive focused initiatives aimed at reducing urban persistent poverty. These initiatives will seek to increase the incomes of poor women and men heading families to expand their opportunities; improve community health so individual options are not limited; improve educational opportunities for citizens at risk to provide all with basics to compete and be productive; and ensure that training, employment and other opportunities are made available, especially to the youth, to enable them to approach adulthood with empowerment and direction.

To accomplish this, the Urban Strategies Council will seek ways to encourage and facilitate the coordination and expansion of existing resources through the use of data to guide policy and the identification of approaches, models and activities that have proven successful in poverty reduction.

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I thank Wade Nobles and the staff of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Black Family Life and Culture for their part in surveying low-income families to determine their needs and desires regarding early childhood programs. For assisting in this work, I thank the following organizations: Spanish Speaking Unity Council, Mission Safe, Laos Family Community, Inc., Vietnamese Fisherman's Association, East Oakland Youth Development Center and the East Oakland Switchboard.

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Lastly, I thank you, in advance, for your support which is needed to effectively change the odds for Oakland's children at risk for persistent poverty.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Angela Glover Blackwell
President and Executive Director
Urban Strategies Council

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PREFACE

In February, 1988 the Urban Strategies Council released a study of persistent poverty in Oakland. This report, *A Chance for Every Child*, described the cycle of chronic poverty, with a focus on the factors that place some Oakland children at particular risk for long-term poverty. Most important, the report sought to identify vulnerable points in the poverty cycle, points at which support and intervention strategies could have maximum success in improving the life options of at-risk children and youth.

One such point is the toddler and preschool years, a time when research shows that comprehensive child development, health and social service programs can counter poverty's effects on children while also supporting their families. Head Start and other high-quality preschool programs, for instance, have been found to improve dramatically the school performance and social skills of low-income children and support their families. Across the nation, early childhood development programs have moved to the top of a new American agenda to fight persistent poverty in this generation of children.

Changing the Odds: Expanding Early Childhood Development Programs for Oakland's Low-income Families is the product of a year-long effort known as the Oakland Early Childhood Development Initiative, organized by the Urban Strategies Council to examine existing early childhood programs and develop a plan for their coordination and expansion.

This effort will be helped significantly by the growing local and national mandate to expand government support for child care programs. It will benefit from new resources flowing into Oakland from the state's welfare-reform effort, Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN). Yet the Initiative's most important objective is to make sure such new resources are tailored to reach families at risk for persistent poverty. Helping welfare-reliant parents to work without adequately providing for their children's care and healthy development is short-sighted. Child care services alone won't sufficiently benefit children who need comprehensive social, education and health services to get a good start in school and in life. Oakland's challenge is to coordinate the diverse programs and resources that serve its low-income families and provide the comprehensive services that are known to break poverty's tight grip on families and children.

To that end, the Working Group of the Oakland Early Childhood Development Initiative, a network of 15 child development providers and advocates, met regularly to discuss program and quality issues and to map out how expansion should proceed. The Initiative's Advisory Committee, made up of local political, government, business and community leaders, endorsed the Initiative's goals and committed itself to exploring ways to implement its recommendations.

The process demonstrated that within the city of Oakland, there is consensus that early childhood development programs are a critical resource in the effort to fight persistent poverty and improve the lives of at-risk Oakland children. *Changing the Odds* surveys what types of early childhood development programs offer the maximum benefit to low-income children and families, and offers a strategy for expanding such programs to reach more Oakland children at risk for persistent poverty.

INTRODUCTION

When the United States declared its War on Poverty two decades ago, one key weapon was Head Start, an innovative preschool education and social services program for low-income children. Based on the notion that a high-quality early childhood program could give poor children the social and cognitive tools to thrive in the classroom, Head Start was designed to help close the school achievement gap – and eventually, the economic gap – between poor and middle-income children.

Scores of other experimental early childhood programs sprang up around the country in those years. The optimism that inspired them turned out to be well-founded. A generation later, research has shown that children in Head Start and other high-quality preschool programs benefited greatly from the experience. They were better equipped to face the classroom, and the early preparation paid off in better school performance than that achieved by their peers who didn't have a preschool experience. Their families drew strength from the range of health, nutrition and parenting support the programs offered. Several studies following preschoolers into young adulthood even found they had lower rates of unemployment, teen parenthood and delinquency than their peers without that early childhood experience.

Yet today, the "head start" on discovery and learning that early childhood education can provide still reaches only a small fraction of the low-income children who could profit from it. In fact, today middle class children are more likely to attend preschool than low-income children. As the benefits of early childhood education are more widely recognized, parents who can afford it are paying for it, while parents without resources must rely on publicly funded programs that serve only a lucky minority of those eligible. Head Start, for instance, serves one in twelve eligible children in Oakland. State-subsidized child development programs serve at most 15 percent of Oakland's eligible two- through five-year-olds. Together, state and federal programs serve 18 percent of eligible preschoolers in Oakland.

The result is a "preschool gap" between poor and middle-income children. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that in families with incomes under $10,000, only 29 percent of three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in a public or private child development program with an educational component (as distinct from a custodial child care arrangement), compared with 75 percent of their peers in families earning more than $25,000. Oakland, too, has seen a preschool gap develop between its low- and middle-income youngsters in the last two decades.

That gap has disturbing implications for the coming generation of school children in poverty, who are already at risk for low school achievement and with it, low economic achievement. It undermines our system of universal public education, if early childhood educational experiences are the norm for families who can afford them, but are limited for those who cannot. Most important, it squanders our chance to use the proven power of early childhood development programs to combat the effects and the threat of chronic poverty.

Nationally, and in Oakland, poverty rates are highest among preschool-age children. In 1980, Oakland's two- through five-year-olds

were the city's poorest residents, with 32 percent living below the poverty line, compared with the city's overall poverty rate of 18 percent. Today, an estimated 45 percent of the city's two- through five-year-olds live below the poverty line, compared with an overall poverty rate of 23 percent.

In Oakland, expanding high-quality, comprehensive early childhood development programs must take a high priority among efforts to improve the educational, employment and life options of low-income youths. Currently Oakland children are served by a rich diversity of child development programs, including schools, community child care centers, churches and family day care homes. Expanding these programs' ability to improve children's social, intellectual, physical and emotional well-being represents a prudent and necessary investment in Oakland's future.

Mandate for action

Across the nation, enlightened state and local leaders are mounting initiatives to extend early childhood development programs to the low-income youngsters who so critically need it. The National Governors Association has pronounced it central to states' education reform efforts. Texas, New York, South Carolina and Missouri are among the states that have launched new early childhood education programs. The cities of New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Minneapolis and Pasadena, California have undertaken local preschool education initiatives.

California has long been the leader in providing state-funded preschool for low-income children, spending $35 million annually on its landmark State Preschool program. But state resources have not kept pace with need. In Oakland, only 550 students are enrolled in State Preschool, out of at least 8,625 eligible. Out of 20,000 eligible two- through five-year-olds, with 12,000 of those below the poverty line, state and federally subsidized child development programs can serve 3,700 children.

With the support of elected officials, business and community leaders and child development advocates, Oakland can begin a campaign to extend the availability of early childhood development programs to every child in need. A local model is crucial to tailor resources and coordinate programs to reach most effectively the families and children most at risk for persistent poverty. Although obstacles exist, Oakland is in a rare position to undertake such a project.

While the city has within its boundaries large numbers of poor and educationally disadvantaged children, it also boasts early childhood resources perhaps unrivalled anywhere: a large roster of subsidized programs, a community of dedicated, talented child development providers, knowledgeable and hardworking resource and referral agencies, forceful early childhood development advocates, a school district concerned about the youngsters who will fill its classrooms in coming years, and political and business leaders concerned about the community and its future.

Recommendations

The following eight recommendations for the expansion and improvement of early childhood development programs for low-income Oakland children were developed by the Working Group of the Oakland Early Childhood Development Initiative. (See pages 47-53 for a full discussion of these recommendations.)

1) The City should establish an Oakland Opportunities for Children Committee, to facilitate the expansion of existing child development programs serving low-income children and to ensure that these programs have the capacity to provide comprehensive family support services.

2) In planning for expansion, Oakland should build on the rich diversity of programs currently providing early childhood development services to low-income Oakland children.

3) Oakland's Head Start programs must be equipped to face the 1990s, with new federal, state and local resources for expansion.

4) The Oakland Unified School District must recognize the importance of its child development programs, and develop a plan to coordinate the programs within the District, and with other local child development and family service resources.

5) Oakland must expand the capacity of private subsidized and private proprietary programs to serve low-income children and families.

6) With a combination of public and private funding, local health, education and social service agencies should be pulled together to establish an "Oakland Birth-to-School Project," to provide comprehensive services in a high-risk neighborhood to parents, infants and preschoolers in poverty.

7) When possible, child care funds connected with the GAIN program and other adult training efforts should be channeled to high-quality, licensed child development programs.

8) Local government officials and community advocates must push for federal and state legislation that enhances our ability to provide a high-quality early childhood development experience to every child in Oakland who needs it.

The reader will find appendices at the end of this report that will be useful in understanding how population and program cost estimates were obtained. Appendix 1 details the sources and methodology for estimates of child population, child poverty and eligibility for subsidized child development services in Oakland. Appendix 2 outlines the funding sources for Oakland programs and provides cost estimates for program expansion. References to materials cited in this report follow the appendices.

SECTION 1

Early childhood development programs: an introduction to learning and achievement

Early childhood development programs offer special benefits to low-income children. Scholars and policymakers have examined the merits of these programs for two decades, and in recent years a consensus has emerged: a high-quality child development experience can improve children's social skills, self-esteem and long-term school performance, by providing a positive introduction to learning that instills the motivation and the basic skills they need to thrive in the classroom, at home and in later life.

The notion that children in poverty could benefit from early developmental programs goes back to the infant school movement of the 19th century. But it was the 1960s that saw a generation of research and theory about early childhood education put into practice, in experiments that ranged from the small-scale Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, to the grand Great Society innovation, Head Start. Although they differed in scope and method, the preschool experiments of the 1960s were linked by a common conviction – early support and intervention could minimize the educational disadvantages of poverty, and enable children from poor families to compete with their middle class peers.

What early childhood programs do

The first evaluators of preschool experiments uncovered mixed results. A 1969 Head Start study, for instance, found that the promising IQ test score gains noticed when Head Start children completed the program disappeared in the early primary grades. Subsequent studies of other preschool programs found the same test score "fadeout."

But many scholars contended those first evaluators asked the wrong questions about the programs' benefits. In the early 1970s, the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies pooled the results of 11 preschool experiments to find dramatic evidence that in fact, the programs had significant lasting benefits. Most encouraging were findings that preschool students had much lower rates of special education placement and grade retention, and higher rates of high school graduation, than students with no preschool experience.

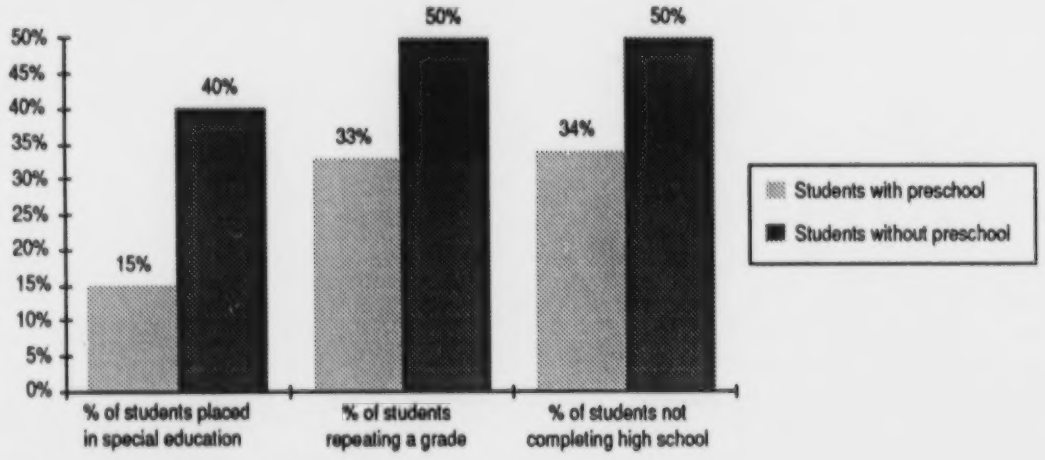
As shown in Table 1 page 12, of the preschoolers who had reached graduation age:

- Fifteen percent had been placed in special education classes but 40 percent of the "controls," who had not attended preschool, were placed in these classes.
- One out of three had repeated a grade, versus half of the controls.
- Two-thirds of the preschoolers had completed high school, compared with half of the controls.

How they work

A wide range of preschool experiments produced similar positive results:

Table 1: Benefits of preschool education for low-income children based on results of 11 preschool experiments



Source: The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies

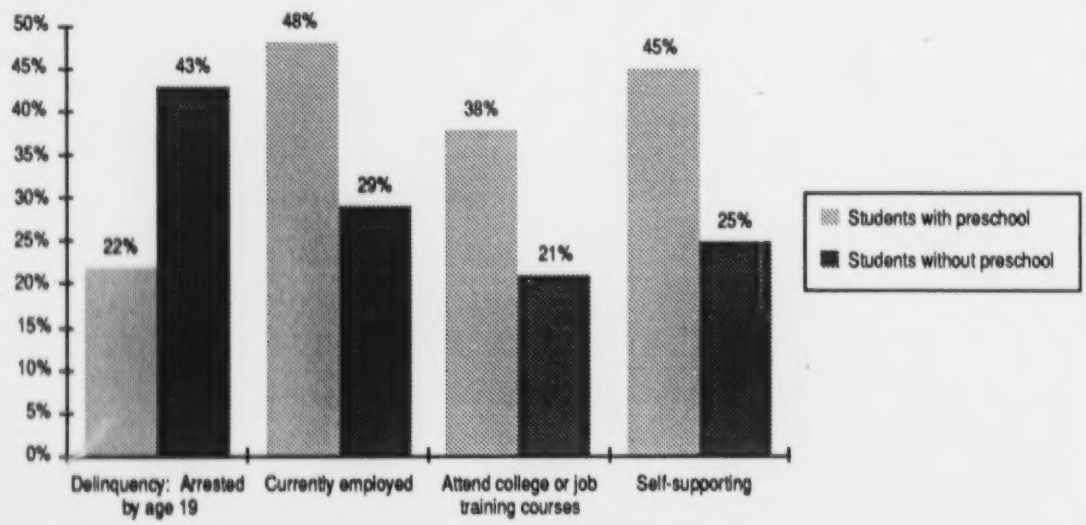
• The Early Training Project in Murfreesboro, Tennessee provided an intensive, daily summer program for Black three- and four-year-olds, followed up by weekly home visits the rest of the year. Its graduates had much lower special education placements and higher graduation rates than control group children. And of the graduates who became pregnant as teenagers, many more of the preschool group persevered to finish high school than those who didn't attend preschool.

• The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, the best-known of the '60s preschool experiments, combined a half-day, school-year program with weekly home visits for Black three- and four-year-olds with low IQ test scores. The High/Scope Foundation has documented significantly improved school performance, but perhaps more striking, dramatically lower rates of teen pregnancy, welfare dependency and delinquency among Perry graduates. (See Table 2 on the next page.) A cost-benefit analysis showed the program saved at least $4 for every $1 invested.

• The Institute for Developmental Studies project enrolled 750 Harlem children at age four and continued to work with them until they completed third grade. At ages 19 to 21, the group involved with the project was twice as likely to be employed as the controls, and had higher rates of college and trade school attendance.

• A study of another Harlem project traced the paths of low-income, Black two- and three-year-old boys who received two years of twice-weekly, individual preschool instruction. This was one of the few studies to document lasting achievement and IQ test score improvement, as well as drastically lower special education placements and grade retentions.

Table 2: Benefits of Perry Preschool Program for low-income children



Source: Findings of High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Longitudinal Study of the Perry Preschool Program

How does a relatively short-term preschool intervention work to make such a significant difference in the lives of low-income youngsters? The Consortium analysts put it this way:

> Perhaps early education taught the children some concrete cognitive skills and exposed them to some school-relevant non-cognitive skills such as attentiveness to teachers, ability to follow instructions and task perseverence. When the children entered first grade, they had positive attitudes toward classroom activities and were able to learn and do the school work.
>
> The public school experience, in short, was also positive. The children's positive attitudes toward school were reinforced, they felt competent. In all probability, their teachers treated them as such. Once set in motion, success tended to breed success.

Most experts agree that early childhood education works by providing support and structure in the critical years when children are developing language and reasoning skills, and providing them with the foundations of learning. But most important, by ensuring that the first education experience of low-income children is a positive one, a quality preschool program gives them the lasting motivation to work and to succeed in the classroom and social setting where so many of their peers founder.

Head Start's legacy

The nation's widest-ranging early childhood experiment, Head Start has served almost 10 million children since its inception in 1965. Research has pronounced Head Start a social

policy success. Observed the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Children, Youth and Families:

> Head Start produces substantial gains in children's cognitive and language development, school readiness and achievement. Head Start children are far less likely to be held back a grade or assigned to a special education class than children who did not attend Head Start, and Head Start children have been found to be more sociable and assertive than comparable youngsters.

Consistent with the Consortium's preschool findings (which included several Head Start programs), studies of Head Start sites around the country have shown in detail that children in the program outperform their non-Head Start peers in school, especially as measured by grade retention and special education placements. Some studies have found that Head Start students match the school performance of middle class children in later years.

But Head Start was designed to be much more than a preschool education program. The project was intended to provide children with comprehensive health, social and nutrition services. And it has strongly emphasized family outreach and support, involving parents in the planning and operation of local Head Start programs. In fact, one-third of all Head Start staff are the parents of past or present Head Start preschoolers. A 1985 report by the Department of Health and Human Services underlined Head Start's success in meeting those goals.

> [Head Start children] have a lower incidence of pediatric problems than non-Head Start children and a level of health comparable to more advantaged children. Head Start parents see benefits to their children that are consistent with program goals and they also see many benefits to themselves. Many Head Start parents attribute improved employment and educational status and elevated personal aspirations to Head Start involvement.

In the words of Oakland Head Start parent Rita Victor, who has sent two of her children through Head Start and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in child development: "The program enabled me to deal with my children more on a one-to-one basis, and to be more patient. I've learned a lot and I'm happy to have the chance to be involved."

Other early childhood programs

Positive results aren't limited to Head Start or the model early childhood programs examined by the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies. Long-term follow-ups have found that state-funded pre-kindergarten programs in New York and Maryland, for instance, improved students' later school performance in comparable ways. A 1982 study of first-graders who had attended Oakland's State Preschool program found that they scored an average of seven percentiles higher on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills than their classmates who didn't attend the program.

In San Francisco, a school district pre-kindergarten program established with compensatory education funds was found to give students a test score advantage over non-preschoolers that persisted into the fourth grade – better than the test score benefits of many experimental programs. Significantly, the San Francisco study found that students who had any kind of child development experience before they entered kindergarten out-tested peers who had no out-of-home child development experience. Other studies have found similar advantages

to a broad array of child development programs, not just those labelled "preschool."

A New York Day Care Council survey found that students who had been in Head Start, public school pre-kindergarten and licensed day care centers outperformed their peers who had no early childhood education or who had been in unlicensed programs. The Carolina Abecedarian project found that a quality day care experience for high-risk children beginning in infancy could improve their social and academic skills. An experimental project of the Yale Child Study Center offered low-income families a high-quality child development program along with health and social services for parents, and found that 10 years later, half as many children who participated in the project experienced "school adjustment problems" as children who didn't participate, and twice as many of their mothers were employed than mothers who did not participate.

Such findings have important implications for an Oakland-based early childhood development initiative, since Oakland children are currently served in a wide variety of settings. State subsidies for low-income children, for instance, go to school-based programs, church-run centers, community-based non-profits, private for-profit centers and family day care homes.

The "verdict" of scholars who have examined effective early childhood programs is that the site of the program – whether a home, a community center or school – doesn't make a difference in the outcome. Quality is the most important variable. Consortium for Longitudinal Studies director Irving Lazar insists that a "systematic educational program" can work in any day care setting, whether a center or a family day care home.

What determines "quality"?

The most important standards for a quality early childhood program are high adult-to-child ratios and staff training in early childhood education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends an adult to child ratio of one to ten for three- and four-year-olds. Curricula should emphasize play and discovery, not rote learning, and be developmentally appropriate – that is, responding to the child at his or her own level, rather than imposing standards of competence and progress that the child must meet. Parent involvement should be maximized.

At an Oakland forum on early childhood development convened to discuss expansion of programs for children at risk for persistent poverty, academic experts were unanimous in their conviction that to be successful, child development programs for at-risk preschoolers must be comprehensive, addressing the child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. "Programs fall short when they look at only one component of a child," cautioned Ursula Davis, an early childhood education director in East Harlem.

Perhaps most important, the program must work with the family, involving parents and other caretakers in day to day decisions as well as offering them education and support. Often the ability to be an effective parent is impaired by the effects of poverty, joblessness and despair. "Sometimes the best thing we can do for a child is help their parents earn an income," noted Jackie Kimbrough, director of The Children's Collective, a child development and parent support program in Los Angeles. Most panelists seconded the opinion of Stanford professor Michael Wald, an expert on child welfare services, who contended: "There's no way that any program can substitute for parenting. In the best child development program, you'll never get the level of care and commitment to a child that a parent provides. That means we have to work with parents to help them give their children what they need."

Within those quality criteria, there is room for a wide array of early childhood programs that improve the lives of children in poverty, at school sites, community centers and day care homes. But University of California professor and early childhood education expert W. Norton Grubb offered one caveat: "It is senseless to cite evidence from exemplary, high-quality programs, then enact programs with low spending, low ratios, low salaries and inadequate teacher preparation."

"It is senseless to cite evidence from exemplary, high-quality programs, then enact programs with low spending, low ratios, low salaries and inadequate teacher preparation."

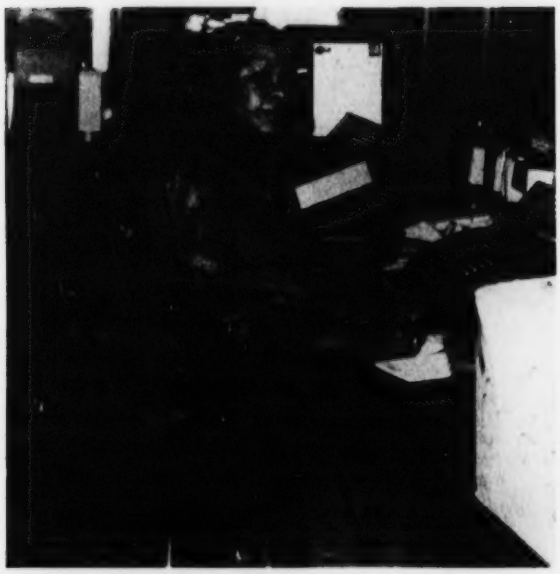
Summary

There is no question that high-quality early childhood development programs can significantly improve the school performance and personal expectations of children in poverty. A wide variety of programs have shown similar results: children with early childhood development experience have more social satisfaction, better problem-solving abilities and more self-confidence than children without it. They do better in school, as measured by special education placements, grade retention and high school graduation rates. Preschool programs have even paid off in lower rates of poverty, crime and unemployment when students reach adulthood. And their families have been strengthened by comprehensive, quality programs.

Whether based in a school, a day care

center or a family day care home, a quality early childhood development experience works by instilling the skills, attitudes and self-confidence that children need in the classroom, and in their lives. It lays the foundation for lifelong enthusiasm toward learning and motivation to succeed. Comprehensive programs that address a child's physical and emotional development while heavily involving parents can minimize the risk of persistent poverty. There is no disagreement about the importance of extending early childhood development services to all children who need them.

PROFILE
Head Start graduate
Valerie Gay



Valerie Gay remembers the first day of kindergarten being a lot tougher on her classmates than it was on her. "I had gone to Head Start, so I felt like I was a big girl. Some kids were crying, but I'd already gotten used to leaving my mother and being with other kids. I already knew how to pay attention to a teacher. I already knew my letters and numbers. I knew I was there to learn, and I was ready."

That made kindergarten a whole lot of fun, Gay recalls. "I became one of the leaders in the class. We'd be learning something and I'd say, 'Oh, I already knew that.' The other kids didn't, and that felt good." Her mother, too, benefited from Head Start: After a year of volunteering in her daughter's classroom, Eleanor Gay was hired as an assistant teacher. Almost 18 years later, she still works for Head Start, at the 98th Avenue site.

Now 22, with business college and two years of work behind her, Valerie Gay is an ambitious young woman with a long list of goals for herself. A receptionist at Coldwell Banker in Oakland, she plans to stay with the firm because it offers opportunities for advancement. "My old job was a dead-end, but here they hire and promote from within, and they offer training in secretarial skills and data processing," she says. "I know I can move ahead here."

Gay doesn't think it's reaching back too far to attribute her adult ambition to her childhood Head Start experience: "You learned that if you did well you got rewarded. You learned how to behave, how to organize yourself. It taught me that there would always be competition, and not to be afraid of it."

Concentrating hard on her career goals, Gay says marriage and children will come later. "I know one thing: I'll never have kids alone. I've watched some of my friends do that and it's just too hard. There's too much else I want to do. Right now I really enjoy my life the way it is."

SECTION 2

Ready or not? Child development and the school readiness continuum

That comprehensive, high-quality early childhood development programs can significantly benefit low-income children is a point beyond dispute. Researchers caution against attempts to measure those benefits too narrowly: expecting one year of preschool, for instance, to produce a specified school performance outcome. Yet with those caveats, education experts believe that early childhood development programs must be a cornerstone of a school-readiness agenda for at-risk children.

On the state and national level, the new concern with "school readiness" reflects a recognition that a child's experiences in the years before school may determine his or her school success as much as what goes on in the classroom. The California Department of Education's Task Force on School Readiness, established to examine why a growing number of children are showing signs of failure in kindergarten and the early primary grades, found that vast readiness differences among children are partly caused by differences in their preschool experiences. Many enter kindergarten as graduates of child development programs, with the social skills and intellectual foundation such experiences can provide. But many others have had no out-of-home child development experience, or have been in poor quality child care, and they often founder in the kindergarten classroom with their more experienced peers.

"Children who are minorities, who have English as their second language, and who are poor are most likely to be retained in kindergarten," the Task Force found. Significantly, they are also the children least likely to have attended preschool: "Minorities and low-income families have an increasingly difficult time finding preschool programs due to less income and diminished federal and state support for subsidized child care," the report noted.

To even out those readiness differences, the Task Force recommended public funding of preschool for four-year-olds and an overhaul of primary grade education, advocating smaller classes with mixed age groups to allow greater emphasis on each child's developmental pace.

Oakland trends

There is growing concern among Oakland educators about "unready" kindergarteners. In interviews, principals and teachers described them as children who are barely old enough to start kindergarten – "old fours and young fives" – and/or have not gone to a structured child development program. Unable or ineligible to attend State Preschool or Head Start and unserved by high-quality, subsidized child development programs, their parents cannot afford a private preschool experience.

Oakland's school children clearly show signs of the state and national trends raising alarm about school readiness. Table 3 on the next page shows that in Oakland, there is evidence of the "preschool gap" between low and middle income children that has been

observed nationally. While only 20 percent of Oakland three- and four-year-olds went to preschool in 1970, by 1980 46 percent did. But that represents only 38 percent of Oakland preschoolers living below the poverty line, compared with 52 percent whose families had incomes above the poverty line. Local and national experts say that gap has probably widened in the past eight years.

In Oakland, as nationally, children from poor families are more likely to be repeat a grade, and later, to drop out of high school – the very school performance problems that research has shown quality child development programs help to prevent.

The schools with the District's highest kindergarten and first grade retention rates are the city's largest schools in its poorest neighborhoods, with the highest percentages of children receiving AFDC. In the 1986-87 school year, District schools retained 9.7 percent of their kindergarten and first grade students. (Retention rates tend to drop to a small fraction after those years.) Of the quarter of elementary schools with the highest retention rates in those two grades combined, 10 of 14 were schools with more than 40 percent of students on AFDC; 8 were schools with a majority of students on AFDC. Put another way, elementary schools with more than half of their students on AFDC make up just a third of the District's grade schools, but constitute 60 percent of the schools with high grade retention rates. (See Table 4.)

Of the remaining four schools with comparatively high retention rates, three were schools with high percentages of Hispanic and Asian language-minority students, and the fourth is Crocker Highlands, which has a strong philosophy, supported by par-

Table 3: Oakland Trends in Preschool Attendance: Percentage of Families Sending Children to Preschool

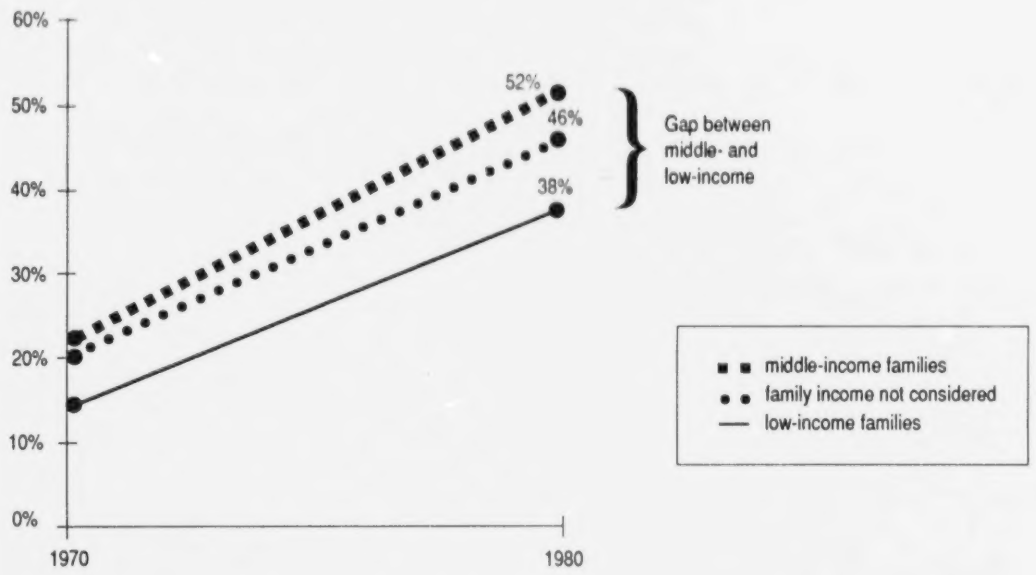
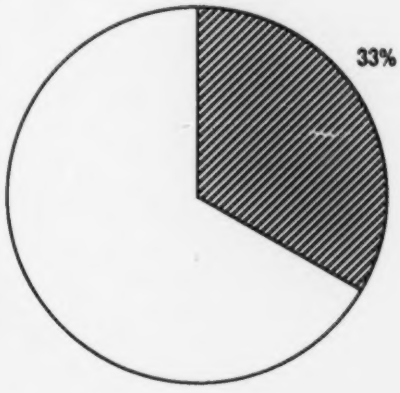


Table 4

A. Percentage of Oakland public schools that are majority AFDC



B. Percentage of high-retention rate schools that are majority AFDC

ents, of retaining students for reasons of social maturation. But the connection between poverty and grade retention was clearest among the schools with retention rates double the District average or higher: six out of seven were schools where a majority of children receive AFDC.

Grade retention is a complex and increasingly controversial issue. The state's education reform package of 1983 required school districts to pursue a more vigorous retention policy, encouraging them to hold back students who clearly didn't meet academic standards and whose attendance records were poor. But a growing body of evidence indicates that retention rarely improves students' school performance, and may actually worsen academic outcomes by marking students as failures and turning them off to school. A study of Oakland students retained in Grade 1 found that when they reached Grade 3 they continued to perform significantly behind District norms, and concluded that retention had offered little if any benefit to those students.

For many Oakland students, these primary grade problems persist in continued low school achievement and academic discouragement, which often lead to a decision to leave school without a diploma. As outlined in great detail in *A Chance for Every Child*, Oakland's high schools are troubled by a high dropout rate. Table 5 on the next page shows District attrition an indicator, though not a precise measure, of dropout rates. The only District high school with an attrition rate lower than the national norm is Skyline High, which has the District's lowest concentration of children from AFDC families.

The District's role

To be successful in reducing persistent poverty, an Oakland Early Childhood Devel-

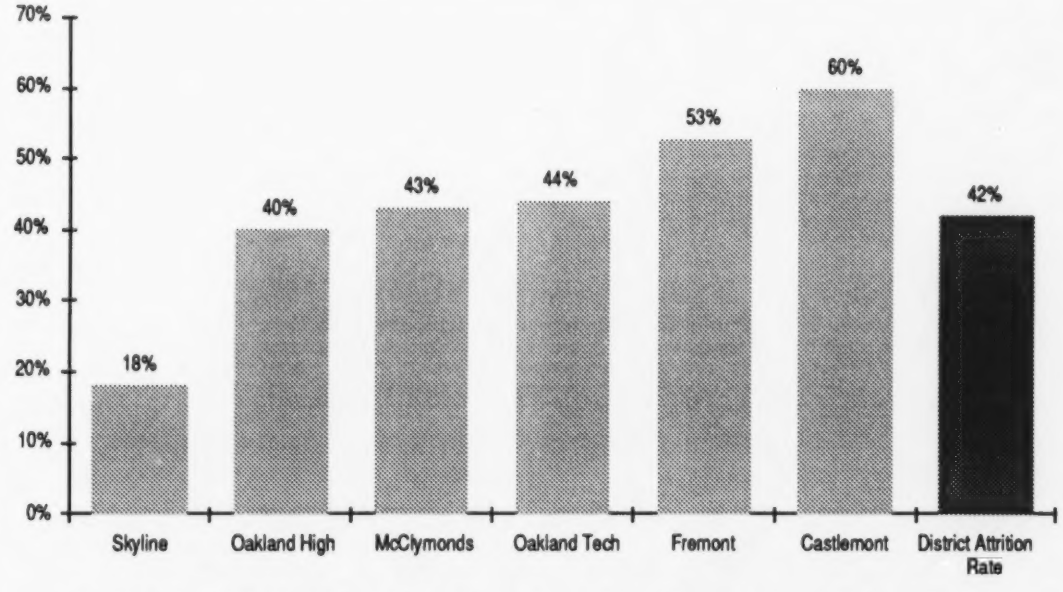
opment Initiative must emphasize family support, health care and social services, not just education. Yet given the proven school performance benefits of high-quality early childhood programs, an Oakland-based initiative must have a strong educational foundation. Most important, early childhood education must be given new prominence in the planning and reform efforts of the Oakland Unified School District.

The District serves two-thirds of all the Oakland children enrolled in state-subsidized child development programs through its Child Development Centers, State Preschool classrooms and Adult Day School programs. Those programs receive more than $9 million in state and federal funding. But funding has not kept pace with demand, and District child development programs have suffered cutbacks in recent years.

The Child Development Centers, for instance, serve about 10 percent fewer children than they once did. State Preschool no longer has access to support staff such as psychologists or nurses. Funding shortages have resulted in threats to cut State Preschool staff, and even the program itself, for the last several years, as the financially-strapped District tries to maintain and expand resources for K-12 classes.

Perhaps as significant, there is no coordination between the programs. While that is understandable – coordination takes staff time, and staff time requires funding – its absence has resulted in two separate programs with essentially the same intended outcomes serving essentially the same population of children operating in isolation from

Table 5: Attrition by School, Class of 1985, Oakland Unified School District



Source: Oakland Unified School District Office of Research; State Dept. of Education Research Division, 1986

one another. Between child development programs and kindergarten, there is another enormous gulf, also problematic.

Most experts agree with the proposition advanced in the book, *Early Schooling: The National Debate*: "If the transition from preschool to the traditional kindergarten classroom [is] left to chance, and there is no meaningful discussion between the personnel in the two settings, many of the developmental gains . . . children made [will] be lost." Still, in many school districts, including Oakland, preschool and other child development programs are not integrated into overall planning for the primary grades.

Yet the shortage of high-quality child development and preschool programs is having an impact on the District. Concern about large numbers of kindergarteners entering school without the benefit of a high-quality child development experience is one factor leading the District to consider establishing "transitional" kindergarten programs. Such programs would enable "unready" children to spend a year in a less structured child development setting before facing the rigors of kindergarten. At Munck Elementary School there is a "developmental" first grade class, where children who teachers feel should repeat kindergarten – often those without preschool experience, according to the state's readiness task force – can take a second year to master kindergarten skills without the stigma of grade retention.

There is some concern that these programs could mean an even earlier start to tracking, the controversial practice of identifying low-achieving students early and serving them in separate, less rigorous educational settings. Such programs are, however, meeting a need to serve an increasingly diverse population that fits less neatly into grade-level categories than previous generations of kindergarteners. Some District officials are recognizing that the need for new programs at this age level requires the development of a comprehensive school readiness plan, and that its cornerstone must be existing child development programs. The next few years are likely to be a time of enormous change in the District's approach to early childhood programs.

Summary

Clearly, the interconnected problems of poverty, inadequate school readiness, and primary grade failure persist throughout the school careers of many low-income children, setting them up for an adulthood spent in persistent poverty. School readiness experts have found that children who have not attended a preschool program are among those most likely to be held back in kindergarten, and that the children who don't attend preschool tend to be low-income minority children whose parents cannot afford it. In Oakland, as nationally, they are the very children who are most likely to be retained in grade school and to drop out of

high school – the disturbing school outcomes that quality child development programs have been shown to help prevent.

There is growing recognition among Oakland educators that money spent on holding children back a grade and on welfare and unemployment costs associated with dropping out would be better spent on child development programs that prevent those outcomes. The coming years should see a new emphasis on early childhood in Oakland Unified School District reforms.

PROFILES

State Preschool parent Yvette Nixon

Having her children in State Preschool hasn't always been easy for Yvette Nixon, a 34-year-old West Oakland mother of four. Working nine-hour shifts as a supermarket cashier, Nixon often had to pay someone to drop off and pick up her children at Cole School's State Preschool program, and care for them after the half-day session ended.

But Nixon wanted more than just babysitting for her children, and the effort to keep them in preschool has been more than worth it to her. "My kids come home from Cole and teach me things that I learned in school, but forgot," Nixon jokes. Last year she had one daughter in preschool; her kindergartener was a Cole preschool graduate.

Nixon sees enormous benefits to her children from their preschool experience. "My kids enjoy reading, and being read to. My oldest girl [a fifth grader at Cole] plays with the others with flash cards. The other day my youngest wrote her own name in ink in her baby book, and I realized, `I didn't teach her that!'"

Volunteering in her daughter's preschool classroom at least twice a month, Nixon is impressed by the way the program fosters the imagination and curiosity of the children. "I love watching them make things – their creativity is so unique," she says. Maybe most important, her children have had caring teachers and a supportive environment. "They don't run into any negative racial stuff at this school," says Nixon, who is Black. "They feel real good about themselves here."

Beacon Day School parent Mary Feinberg

Before her daughter Elizabeth was even born, Mary Feinberg knew one thing: that she would attend preschool, like her brother before her. "Alexander had mostly played by himself when he was very small and he got too isolated," Feinberg recalls. When he was enrolled in Oakland's Beacon Day School, at almost four, the transition was difficult, but he overcame his adjustment problems with the help of teachers and counselors. "I knew that as soon as Elizabeth was toilet trained, we'd send her to preschool," Feinberg says.

Although she has chosen not to work outside the home while her children are young, Feinberg believes they need a preschool experience nonetheless. "The child who stays at home is going to seem socially

Mary Feinberg and her children

inept in kindergarten, compared with the child who's been in child care since they were six months old," she says. The Feinbergs chose Beacon, a well-regarded private nursery and elementary school, for its developmental emphasis and educational philosophy. "We wanted a program that provided some structure, and some learning," she says. At Beacon the structure is one of "controlled chaos," Feinberg jokes. "They let the kids do a lot of things as play that they truly learn from. And it gives them the love of learning at an early age."

Ironically, Feinberg believes, middle class parents were impressed by the benefits of preschool programs for the poor like Head Start, and today want to provide that advantage to their children. "Nursery school used to only be for the very rich," she notes. "But Head Start showed it was an idea that really worked for kids." To Feinberg, the obvious benefits of preschool mean that more parents who can afford it will pay for early childhood education: "Nobody wants to see their kids left behind."

SECTION 3:
Oakland's early childhood resources: quality, diversity, but scarcity

Oakland benefits from an extraordinary variety of early childhood development resources for children of families at every income level. Despite that diversity, Oakland parents face a scarcity of high-quality child development programs that have vacancies and meet their needs.

There are an estimated 26,500 two- through five-year-olds in Oakland. Licensed child development programs have space for only about 8,000. More than 20,000 Oakland preschoolers are eligible for publicly subsidized child development services – and 12,000 of them live below the poverty line – but Oakland's subsidized programs serve just over 3,700 two- through five-year-olds.

By any measure, subsidized programs are in critical need of expansion. Low-income parents who are working or receiving public assistance cannot afford to purchase a quality early childhood experience for their children without help.

Oakland's subsidized services

Those children who can be served by public subsidy participate in a wide range of programs at school sites, community centers, private nursery schools and licensed family day care homes:

• The City of Oakland Head Start program serves 550 Oakland children at 15 sites around the city. Another 38 are served in its Home Base program, in which Head Start staff works with families in their homes. Oakland Parent Child Center, another Head Start contractor, serves 290 children, most of them infants and toddlers in an innovative Head Start spin-off geared for younger children. The traditional program offers a structured, half-day preschool experience for low-income children – 90 percent of whom have family incomes below the poverty line – that takes a "whole-child focus," providing nutrition and health services to Oakland children who might otherwise get little medical attention. Since its inception, Head Start has placed a premium on supporting and involving parents, who serve as classroom staff and volunteers, and as members of advisory committees that help determine program content and direction. While some Head Start sites have waiting lists, others are under-enrolled, forcing administrators to develop new outreach strategies for the program's changing target population.

• The State Preschool program serves 514 children at 14 sites in a half-day program, and another 40 at two sites not run by the Oakland Unified School District. Designed to provide the school readiness that low-income children might not otherwise attain, State Preschool is open to three- to five-year-olds whose families meet the income eligibility criteria for state subsidy. Unlike other state-subsidized child development programs, however, parents are not required to be working or in training to enroll their children in the State Preschool program. The curriculum emphasizes the development of "pre-reading" and "pre-mathematical" skills

through small-group games and play sessions. Parents are encouraged, though not required, to volunteer in their children's classroom regularly.

• Child Development Centers operated by the Oakland Unified School District serve an estimated 1,300 two- through five-year-olds at 22 sites at or near elementary schools. Most are open between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. to meet the child care needs of working parents. Guided by program standards established by the State Department of Education's Child Development Division, the centers emphasize age-appropriate early childhood education, using games and play to teach children language, numbers and social skills.

. . . many church-run and private proprietary early childhood programs offer scholarships and discounts to some children whose families cannot afford the full tuition.

• Community-based non-profit centers serve about 600 two-through five-year-olds with State Department of Education funds. Some programs may serve subsidized children along with fee-paying preschoolers, but most are designed expressly to serve low-income children. Most offer full-day programs, to meet working parents' child care needs, that emphasize a high-quality early childhood education for children. Like the Child Development Centers, most provide an age-appropriate, play-oriented curriculum to provide children with some basic, pre-school skills. Parent involvement efforts can vary widely, from no formal parent involvement to structured outreach efforts to strict requirements on parental involvement.

• Private nursery schools serve 28 Oakland two- to five-year-olds through the Department of Education's Alternative Payment program. Coordinated by the Professional Association of California Alternative Payment programs, local nursery schools reserve one or more spaces for low-income children whose parents want them in a private setting, whether because of program quality, reputation or convenience.

• Family Day Care homes serve 150 two- to five-year-olds through the Alternative Payment system. Day care home operators may serve up to six preschool age children, or twelve with the help of an assistant. Many day care operators strive to provide a high-quality developmental and education experience comparable to that received in a pre-school setting, while some homes offer little in the way of formal early childhood education to children, emphasizing caretaking instead. At least two networks for licensed day care home operators have emerged around the city of Oakland, striving to overcome operators' isolation and provide them with training and support for expanded early childhood education efforts in their homes.

Another 350 Oakland children are served in subsidized programs connected with Adult Day Schools and local colleges. Additionally, many church-run and private proprietary early childhood programs offer scholarships and discounts to some children whose families cannot afford the full tuition.

Who isn't served?

As we saw in the previous section, there is in Oakland a marked "preschool gap" between low- and middle-income children – 38 percent of poor three- and four-year-olds compared with 52 percent of the non-poor attended preschool in 1980. Up to 80 percent of Oakland children are eligible for publicly subsidized child development programs, but

such programs serve only 15 percent of those eligible.

Black children are disproportionately living below the poverty line in Oakland, and make up the vast majority of children unserved by existing child development resources. As outlined in *A Chance for Every Child*, their childhood poverty puts them at extreme risk for school failure, dropping out and adult poverty. When they reach kindergarten, poor Black children tend to be segregated in the District's larger elementary schools with high proportions of students on AFDC. Of the seven schools with the District's highest Kindergarten-First Grade retention rates (discussed in Section 2) six are more than 70 percent Black and three of these are more than 90 percent Black.

Hispanic, Asian and American Indian children are also notably underserved by existing subsidized resources. In 1980, only 26 percent of Qakland's Hispanic three- and four-year-olds were in preschool programs, compared with 46 percent of all Oakland children. For Hispanic children living in poverty, that percentage dropped to 17 percent. And those poor Hispanic children, according to census data, were enrolled only in public preschool programs.

The number of Asian children in Oakland has almost doubled since 1980, according to census data and school enrollment statistics. Today Asian and Pacific Islanders make up 17.4 percent of the Oakland Public School population. An estimated 3,900 two- to five-year-olds of Asian and Pacific Islander descent live in Oakland. The Asian Foundation for Community Development estimates that 60 percent of them are the children of immigrant parents, most of them refugees. Southeast Asian refugees are among Oakland's poorest residents, with poverty rates of up to 80 percent for some ethnic groups. By all accounts Asian children are dramatically underserved by existing subsidized child development resources.

American Indian children are also among Oakland's poorest residents, with poverty rates of 35 percent as of 1980. One Oakland Unified School District program, the Hintil Kuu Ca Child Development Center, serves the city's largest population of American Indian children with a culturally appropriate curriculum. (There is a Head Start program there as well.) The center serves 60 two- through five-year-olds, and has a waiting list of 40 children.

Another notably underserved group is the children of teen parents. While most teens' children are very young, and technically out of this report's two- through-five-year-old focus, increasing the number of infant-care slots for teen parents would increase the participation of their children in early childhood programs.

Some 600 Oakland teens give birth each year, but there are only 44 children of teens

being served by subsidized infant care programs in Oakland. Discouraged in their attempts to find infant care, many of these teen mothers leave school, rely on AFDC, and fall out of the network of services that could lift them and their children out of poverty. Head Start administrators say they have the greatest difficulty locating and serving these young mothers and their children.

The 11,500 two- through-five-year-olds receiving AFDC in Oakland present special problems in planning for early childhood development program expansion. They often fall into a limbo of subsidized child care ineligibility, despite their low family incomes. Enrollment in most state-subsidized programs is restricted to children whose parents are working, seeking work, in a job training or education program, and children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. While some parents of preschoolers on AFDC are also working or training, making their children eligible for state subsidized child care, most are not. Their children, who could likely benefit most from an early childhood development experience, can only be served through Head Start and State Preschool, which together serve fewer than one in seven of the eligible three- to five-year-olds in Oakland. Only one subsidized program accepts two-year-olds whose parents are not working or in school.

Yet outreach to non-working AFDC parents is a growing challenge, administrators say. While some Head Start and State Preschool sites have waiting lists, a few sites are under-enrolled. Transportation problems prevent many parents from using available services outside their neighborhood. Others who are considering working or training prefer to seek out full-day programs that can meet their child care needs. As already discussed, many young parents who couldn't find infant care lose connection with service networks that could refer them to child development programs. This is not just a problem for teen mothers. There are 13,000 babies under two in Oakland, an estimated 6,000 of whom live below the poverty line, but there are only 1,300 infant care slots – fewer than 600 are subsidized – in the entire city. Many young parents rely on grandparents and great-grandparents to care for their children. These older caretakers are often missed in traditional outreach efforts.

For low-income families who want to access subsidized early childhood programs but can't be served by existing resources, there are few options. If parents are unemployed, it's unlikely their children are receiving any out-of-home early childhood education. If they are working, they are most likely relying on family, neighbors and other unlicensed care arrangements because of their affordability. Many low-income children are also cared for in licensed family day care homes, because they are often more accessible (and sometimes less expensive) than center-based care. Almost half of Oakland's non-subsidized, licensed child development slots are in family day care homes.

Finally, two groups of children dramatically underserved by existing child development resources are homeless children and children with disabilities. Families with children are the fastest growing population of homeless nationally and in Oakland. A 1987 survey of Oakland shelters found that one-third of the homeless served there are children under five. No child care programs are specifically geared to homeless children, although they are eligible for subsidized services as well as short-term respite child care. Local shelter administrators cited child care as their highest service priority in a 1986 survey.

Children with disabilities and exceptional needs face enormous barriers to service in public or private child development programs. Statewide, subsidies geared to serving exceptional needs children reached 1,000 out of the 80,000 who needed care. (Oakland's Pacific Children's Center is one such state-funded center.) The state prefers to "mainstream" most children with disabili-

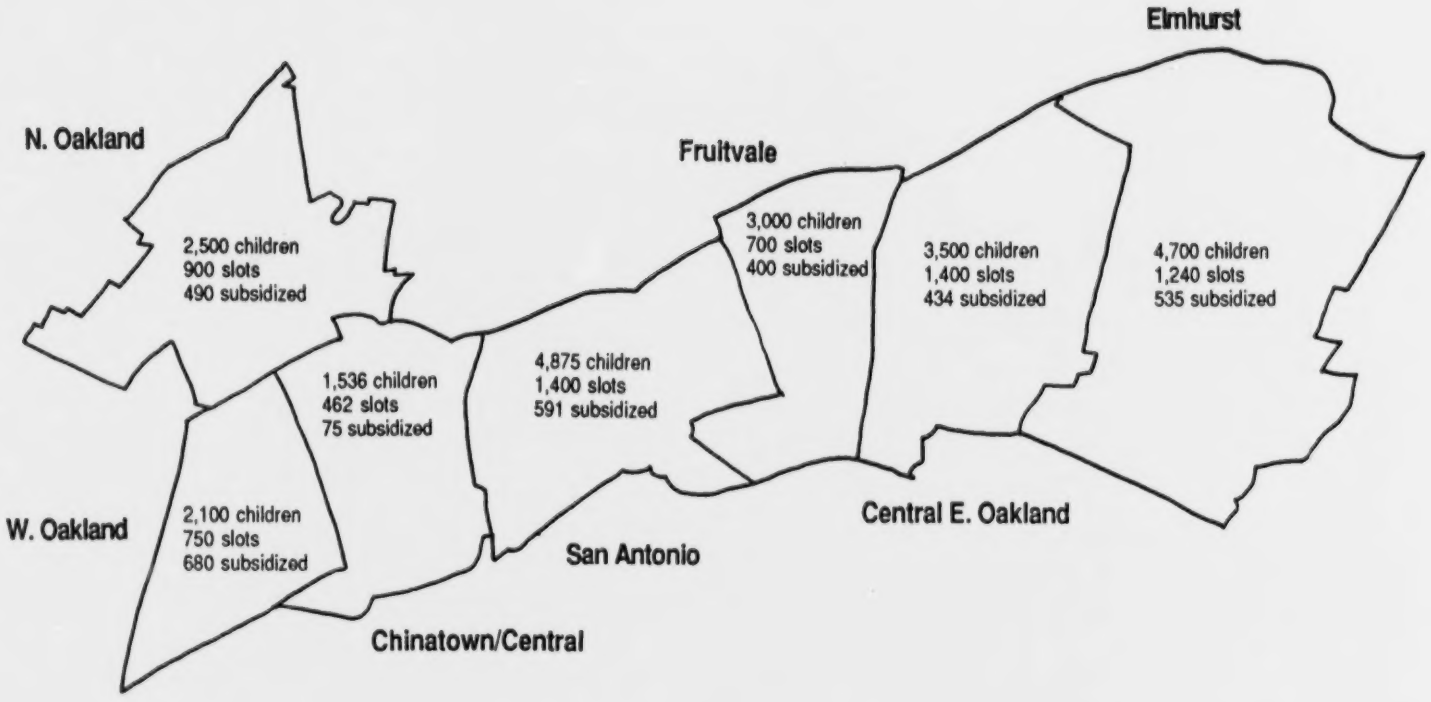


Chart shows for seven Community Development Districts:
Number of 2- to 5-year-old children per community district
Number of licensed child care slots
Number of subsidized slots

Table 6
Child care resources in the City of Oakland

ties into standard child development programs, a policy validated by research and most advocacy groups. But it means that those children, like so many other Oakland children, are competing for scarce resources.

. . . sections of the city where Oakland's poorest residents live have far more preschool-age children than existing preschool resources.

Even more problematic, the number of public and private child care providers with training and facilities for serving exceptional needs children are few. A survey by Berkeley Planning Associates for the State Department of Education's Child Development Division found that the overwhelming majority of Oakland families with disabled children use some type of child care, but most of it is informal or unlicensed. Seventeen percent of the parents said they had quit a job because of child care problems, and 21 percent relied on AFDC. Almost half of the families had annual incomes below $15,000.

Where are the unserved?

The geographic survey of Oakland's child development resources in Table 6 on the preceding page offers another perspective on who is and is not served by existing programs. Predictably, sections of the city where Oakland's poorest residents live have far more preschool-age children than existing preschool resources.

The San Antonio district, for instance, has an estimated 4,875 one- through five-year-olds in its neighborhoods, but only 1,400 spaces for them in licensed child development programs. In this high-poverty neighborhood, there are only 600 subsidized child development slots for that age group. In Elmhurst, there are only 1,240 slots – 535 of them subsidized – for 4,700 children. In Fruitvale, 3,000 children must compete for 700 child development slots. Central East Oakland has 1,400 spaces – only 400 of them subsidized – for 3,500 children.

This geographic mismatch is significant, because in interviews and focus groups with parents who have selected preschool options for their children, proximity to home was a major factor in choosing a program. While some parents are willing to travel to find a quality program for their child, others cannot manage the cost or the inconvenience of long commutes to a child care program. And the overall scarcity of subsidized programs means that even a willingness to travel long distances won't guarantee that a parent will be able to find a child development program that can serve his or her child.

Summary

A diverse roster of early childhood programs serves Oakland's two- through five-year-olds. But with 8,000 spaces for 26,500 children, and 3,700 subsidized spaces for more than 20,000 low-income children who need them, Oakland is facing a crisis in child development program availability.

The availability crisis is becoming particularly severe for Black children living in poverty, along with Hispanic, Asian and American Indian children, since program growth is not keeping pace with the rise in their numbers or their poverty. It may be exacerbated by state regulations restricting most child development subsidies to parents who are working or in training, meaning that most of the 11,500 two- to five-year-olds on AFDC in Oakland are not eligible for most state-subsidized programs. Serving AFDC families who have fallen out of service networks presents a special challenge for administrators and advocates, since these children are arguably most in need of comprehensive, early childhood services.

PROFILES

OPCC parents Alba Merino and Cheryl Bradford

In June, 1988, 17-year-old Alba Merino accomplished what seems impossible for many teenage mothers – she graduated from high school. But Merino says she owes her diploma not just to her own hard work, but to the help of the Oakland Parent Child Center, a child development and family support program that serves teen parents. "I would never have been able to stay in school without the Center," she insists. When her two-year-old daughter Ingrid was born, Merino recalls, the least expensive child care arrangement she found would have cost $40 a week. "That's cheap, but I couldn't even afford that," she says.

But a teacher at Grant High School told the young mother about OPCC, and she was able to enroll with her child. Merino earned high school credit for spending her first class period of the day at OPCC, caring for her child with the support of center staff and socializing with other teen parents (including young fathers). The program requires daily participation by the teens, as well as involvement in ongoing projects like its Policy Council, Teen Panel and fundraising activities. "I think it's really helped me develop my leadership capabilities," Merino notes.

Alba Merino and daughter Ingrid

Cheryl Bradford and daughter Tiyuona

Just as important, she believes Ingrid has thrived in the program. "My girl likes a lot of individual attention, and she gets it. They have about five kids in each group. I really feel like she learns a lot here – and there's a lot of teaching that I wouldn't have been able to give her myself." Another OPCC parent, Cheryl Bradford, sees similar benefits to her two-year-old, Tiyuona. "During the day she

draws, she looks at books, and then she comes home and wants to do that, too. I'm always saying to her, 'How did you learn to do that?'"

Along with its Teen Parent Program, OPCC runs a Head Start center, offering low-income families with children ages six weeks to five years the comprehensive range of Head Start services. OPCC is one of the city's few programs serving Southeast Asian refugee families and their children. Eligible parents may also pursue English as a Second Language classes at the center.

SECTION 4:
Providers' and parents' views

Child development professionals and parents have strong opinions about the importance of early childhood development programs, what such programs should provide and the obstacles to extending those services to more Oakland children who could benefit from them. In meetings, focus groups and interviews with parents and providers, many common themes emerged. All were convinced of the importance of a high-quality child development experience for children, and most were deeply concerned because limited resources can serve only a minority of eligible children.

Obstacles to expansion

The Working Group of the Oakland Early Childhood Development Initiative, representing 15 Oakland-based preschool and child development programs for low-income children, identified a roster of barriers to expansion of such programs:

• First and foremost was money. More than three-quarters of Oakland children are eligible for state-subsidized child development services. To afford quality early childhood education, most Oakland parents need financial assistance. But state and local subsidies have not kept pace with the rise in demand. As we saw in the previous section, there are 3,700 subsidized child development spaces for at least 20,000 eligible two- through five-year-olds.

• Providers report a staffing crisis in most early childhood education programs. Low wages have meant high turnover among early childhood teachers and aides. Centers report 40 to 50 percent annual turnover rates, and staff vacancies go an average of one month before being filled. The skill and sensitivity needed to staff programs serving disadvantaged children are not reflected in wage levels or the funding available to most programs. Some programs serving Hispanic and Asian children report particular difficulty in finding ethnically appropriate, trained staff. Compounding the problem is the erosion of child development training resources at East Bay community colleges and universities. Working Group members were concerned that even if funds were made available for substantial early childhood expansion, there would be insufficient staff to work in new programs without a concerted effort to develop a pool of qualified persons and attract them with decent compensation.

• There is an enormous shortage of appropriate facilities for early childhood education programs. At least two well-respected Oakland programs reported having funds to expand their services to children, but have been unable to secure a building that meets their needs.

• State-subsidized child development programs based in schools have been caught in a legislative stalemate over appropriate program costs and funding levels. The Deukmejian administration has attempted to cut school-based program costs by reducing staff-child ratios and staff qualifications, and has balked at providing cost-of-living adjustments and expansion funds until those cost-

cutting measures, opposed by many legislators, are ratified. One result is that Child Development Centers run by the Oakland Unified School District have cut the number of children served by 10 percent over the last several years.

• Head Start and, to a lesser degree, State Preschool administrators report that their traditional outreach methods are not working as well with a changing population of younger single mothers and their more disadvantaged children. The parents are less connected to community agencies that would refer them to such programs. The children are often in the care of grandparents and great-grandparents, who are outside the reach of traditional program recruitment efforts. Thus while some sites have waiting lists, a few sites have vacancies.

• A related problem is the shortage of subsidized infant care slots, especially for the infants of teen parents. Providers say that teens are often motivated to seek child care upon the birth of their baby, to enable them to stay in school or job training, but if they are unsuccessful they may drop out of social service networks, become dependent on AFDC, and later not use programs like Head Start and State Preschool even though space is available. There are only 600 subsidized infant care slots for about 6,000 infants who live below the poverty line – and 10,000 who are eligible – and only 44 subsidized spaces serving teen parents. Yet involving young mothers in child development programs upon the birth of an infant is crucial to ensure that the child is served in quality programs through kindergarten.

• Restrictive eligibility criteria for state-subsidized services means that most programs cannot serve the children of AFDC recipients who are not working or in training. At least one state-subsidized center in a high-poverty neighborhood is chronically under-enrolled because there are few employed parents nearby who are eligible for the program.

• Half-day programs like Head Start and State Preschool would like to attract more working poor parents, but they are unable to provide the full-day child care coverage working parents need. To date, programs have few resources to devote to coordination between appropriate groups and services to provide full-day child care at half-day programs – e.g. the recruitment of other agencies, like non-profit groups or family day care home networks, to provide full-day services for children after their part-day program ends.

• Without greater parental demand for these services, political leaders have been slow to make their expansion a priority, despite the evidence of their social and academic benefits to at-risk children.

• Employers have been slow to support parents' involvement in early childhood education, either by providing preschool subsidies, or by allowing employees time to participate in their children's preschool activities.

• Currently, there is a perception of child care as mainly a service to working parents, and a lack of recognition that early childhood education can provide important benefits for children.

What parents want

In focus groups and interviews with low-income parents with preschool-age children, some clear parental preferences emerged. All the groups consider an early childhood development experience critical to their children's socio-emotional development and school readiness. "They learn to study, to develop themselves, to get along with other children," commented one parent. "They already have an advantage – they are ready to enter school." And all said that lack of funds prevented them from taking advantage of available services. Parents were most familiar with programs run by the Oakland Unified School District, and were aware that those programs had long waiting lists.

The groups also shared a sense that preschool programs should not stress academics, but rather emphasize social development, curiosity and play, to let children enjoy their childhood. Most preferred full-day to half-day programs, even if they were not working. They wanted the programs to be staffed by well-trained professionals handling small groups of children, who fostered parental involvement. Not surprisingly, all emphasized that their children should be well-treated and loved.

Each ethnic group also expressed some unique concerns. Black parents were terribly concerned about the safety and well-being of their children in their sometimes dangerous neighborhoods, and wanted to see programs that could guarantee safety. Single mothers viewed child development programs as a way to help their young sons grow up independent from them, and expressed a desire to see men working in those programs, to provide their children with male role models. Some favored programs at churches, trusting those institutions to care for their children as well as provide them with values training. Many relied on their mothers and sisters for their child care needs, and wanted to see child development programs involve grandmothers and aunts, as well as parents. All were concerned that their children not be exposed to racism by teachers or classmates, and that programs foster a positive Black identity while exposing children to other races.

Hispanic parents sought programs that would give their children a strong foundation in the English language without stripping them of their cultural identity or close family ties. Most of the parents said that their own lack of English language ability had prevented them from using available child development services. Like the Black parents, they feared that their children would encounter racism in some child development programs – several felt that racism had blocked their access to such programs. Though they wanted their children in multi-ethnic programs, they wanted to ensure that their child's own ethnic identity was respected.

Most of the Asian parents surveyed were fairly recent immigrants. They placed a high value on a preschool experience for their child, one that provided an education grounded in values, social skills and practical knowledge. They tended to prefer school-based programs. The Asian parents were least likely to know about child development programs for their children, suggesting that outreach to that community is a problem. They were also most likely to say that transportation was a serious concern, and to favor programs that offered transportation services to children.

American Indian parents have many of the same concerns, according to program administrators. But the long legacy of government disrespect for their parental rights in childraising, including the historic removal of children to boarding schools and foster care, has made American Indian parents wary of out-of-home child development programs. Administrators say successful programs are those that become partners with parents and the extended families of American Indian children. Oakland's 14-year-old Hintil Kuu

Ca program is nationally known among American Indians for its family involvement and its culturally sensitive curriculum.

Summary

Parents and child development professionals identify similar barriers to extending child development services to more Oakland children. The first, not surprisingly, is funding. A shortage of well-trained, adequately paid professionals is a serious problem, since parents wanted high-caliber people working with their children. Racial, ethnic and language sensitivity is increasingly important, given the diversity of Oakland's low-income residents. Lack of information about available resources seems to be a problem among all groups, but particularly Asian parents. Parents and providers agree that a high-quality, developmentally appropriate, nurturing child development experience is crucial to children's social and intellectual development, and that too few children are having that kind of early childhood experience in Oakland today.

SECTION 5:
Models for action

The crisis of child poverty in the 1980s has inspired a new wave of experimental early childhood interventions across the nation, building on the lessons of Head Start and other comprehensive early childhood programs for poor children. These efforts are backed by a growing roster of government and business leaders concerned that this generation of poor children is at risk for lifetime poverty, unless quality programs are established to break the dismal cycle that leads from child poverty to low school achievement, and later, adult unemployment.

The Committee for Economic Development, for instance, an influential corporate research and policy group, called upon the nation to expand "quality preschool education . . . until every eligible child has the opportunity to be enrolled." The California Business Roundtable recently echoed that call. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recommends state and federal support for expanding Head Start to all eligible children. And both the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governors Association have labelled early childhood education expansion a top priority for state government.

California is nationally known as a leader in the child development field. But Oakland can draw from a wide range of national, state and local models as it designs its own Early Childhood Development Initiative.

The Beethoven Project, Chicago, Illinois

"A Marshall Plan for preschoolers" is the way advocates describe The Beethoven Project, a comprehensive parent and child education and social service program based in the Robert Taylor Homes housing project on Chicago's South Side. More than 20,000 low-income residents live in the project, most of them single mothers and their children, 90 percent of whom receive public assistance. The Taylor Homes have Chicago's highest infant mortality rate. School problems start early for the project's youngsters: one-third of the first graders at Beethoven Elementary School – the school that Taylor children attend, for which the project was named – are held back each year. High rates of teen pregnancy, crime and unemployment have framed a bleak future for the project's youth.

The Committee for Economic Development, . . . an influential corporate research and policy group, called upon the nation to expand quality preschool education . . . .

But a partnership between philanthropist-businessman Irving Harris, federal and state social service officials and community leaders spawned a model program that aims to brighten that dismal picture. The Beethoven Project targets Taylor children before they are born, working with their pregnant mothers to provide health care, counseling, parenting education and encouragement – most are teenagers – to stay in school. When the children are born, the project's Center for

Successful Child Development and its home visitors teach the mothers how to nurture and stimulate the infants, and continue to provide health and education services to the whole family throughout the child's first five years of life.

"When he walks in the door at Beethoven Elementary, we expect him to be competent in the fullest sense of the word – able to learn, think well, communicate well, get along with others well," says Judith Musick of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, one of the project's sponsors. But more than just a preschool program, the Beethoven Project seeks to provide a center of community for the young mothers. It relies on door-to-door outreach to locate pregnant women and encourage them to participate, and so far few have refused. The project's drop-in center encourages frequent visits, for socializing as well as child development classes. Its home visitors and family advocates are Taylor residents, most of them former welfare recipients. Beethoven has become a national model for local leaders concerned about persistent poverty.

Ysleta Pre-Kinder Center
El Paso, Texas

Texas required school districts to offer pre-kindergarten to low-income and non-English speaking four-year-olds as part of its education reform effort in 1984. In El Paso, school officials used that mandate to create what has been called a model program for four-year-olds and their parents. The Ysleta center serves 1,000 children, most of them Hispanic, in a "learning laboratory" designed to provide the social and education skills they'll need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

While Texas allows as many as 25 four-year-olds per teacher in its pre-kindergarten classes, Ysleta limits enrollment to 11 children per adult, to maximize teacher-child interaction. The half-day sessions place heavy emphasis on play and discovery, and include special health and nutrition programs. Equally important as the classroom activities is a literacy program for parents.

Parents are required to volunteer at the school once a month, or attend parent education sessions three times a year. Children take home books from the school library, so that their parents can read to them. Pleased by their children's growth, most parents are enthusiastic participants. "In just one month, there was a big change in her," said one mother of her Ysleta pre-kindergartener. "I think it put the love of learning into her early."

Take a Giant Step
New York, New York

Alarm at city students' low school achievement and high dropout rate prompted New York Mayor Ed Koch to form an Early Childhood Education Commission in 1985, charged with investigating ways of providing New York preschoolers with early education opportunities that would better prepare them for the classroom. In a year of hearings and research, the Commission found that of the third of New York four-year-olds living below the poverty line, fewer than half were served in subsidized child-development programs. The Commission recommended that the city make preschool available to every New York four-year-old who needs it.

Starting in New York's neediest neighborhoods, the city currently has space to serve 5,000 four-year-olds in half-day public school programs. The staff-to-child ratio is 1 to 10, and the curriculum stresses the development of learning aptitudes through age-appropriate, child-directed activities. Some advocates are concerned that working poor parents, in particular, won't make use of the program because it offers no full-day child care. But in an era of fiscal limits, most applaud the city's decision to invest in this critical program for low-income children.

New Parents as Teachers Missouri

In crafting an early childhood development initiative, the state of Missouri took seriously the caveats of experts that even high-quality programs can't substitute for parents. So educators designed New Parents as Teachers, to develop parents' abilities to teach and nurture their infants and toddlers. The endeavor started small, with four pilot programs established in 1981 to test the program's design and emphasis. Run by school districts, the projects used developmental screenings, home visitors and parent meetings to help low-income parents become skilled nurturers and educators for their children. Low-income parents are eligible for the program as early as the third trimester of pregnancy.

After three years, evaluators concluded that New Parents as Teachers had successfully increased the children's intellectual abilities, and turned the parents into effective educators as well as advocates for their children when they reached the classroom. Children in the pilot projects showed school readiness levels comparable to their more advantaged peers. Today the nationally renowned program has a statewide reach, bringing expertise about child development into the homes of low-income Missouri families with children up to three years old.

Way to Grow Minneapolis, Minnesota

Galvanized by the interest and activism of business and community groups, the city of Minneapolis has launched an ambitious strategy to link low-income children and families with existing health, social and child development services, and expand those programs as needed. The program, "Way to Grow," establishes a continuum of recommended early childhood services with a special emphasis on high-risk children and families living in poverty in Minneapolis.

The project's goal is the promotion of school readiness among low-income children.

Expanding early childhood education programs has become a community priority in Minneapolis, thanks to business, government and community activism. The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, which is planning the implementation of the "Way to Grow" program, has called for the expansion of Head Start to every eligible city child. The Minneapolis Business Community Employment Alliance labelled early childhood education opportunities the first step in preventing unemployment among city residents. In turn, the United Way made early childhood opportunities its top support priority, and launched a campaign, "Success by Six," designed to identify and remove barriers to the expansion of early childhood programs. Supported by local foundations, these public-private partnerships are mapping a path toward comprehensive early childhood programs for every Minneapolis

child at risk for school failure and poverty.

Family Learning Center
Leslie, Michigan

In the mid-1970s educators in Leslie, Michigan were troubled by rising numbers of teen parents leaving school because of a lack of services, especially child care, for them and their children. They established the Family Learning Center, a comprehensive program providing teen families with health care, child development services, counseling and parent education. Today the program serves pregnant and parenting teens and their families from seven other school districts. Its youngest children are infants, and its oldest are ready to begin school.

With 10 years of experience, Family Learning Center staff has been able to document what other teen parent programs know from anecdotal evidence: comprehensive programs allow teen parents to finish school, and ensure the healthy development of their children. Among the sixty babies born between 1982 and 1985, for instance, only four were low-birthweight. There were only two repeat pregnancies to participating mothers in those years. More than 90 percent of the girls enrolled in the program in 1985 stayed in school. And most increased their grade-point averages. The program won a Ford Foundation award for public service in 1986.

PROFILE

The Oakland Licensed Day Care Association

Yolanda Wilson enjoyed her work teaching in child development centers, but her long-term goal was to run her own child care business. Two years ago Wilson took the big step and joined the ranks of family day care providers, opening Peepsie's Preschool on the first floor of the West Oakland Victorian building where she lives. One of her first decisions was to join the Oakland Licensed Day Care Association (OLDCA). "I really believe in organizations, and day care providers in particular need a support group," she says. Now she's OLDCA treasurer, and an articulate advocate for her profession.

All child development professionals must fight for respect and recognition of their crucial role in the growth and development of young children. But family day care home operators have perhaps the toughest battle. Often their service is downgraded as mere "babysitting" – long on nurturing, perhaps,

Yolanda Wilson

but short on education – and compared unfavorably to the structured, developmental activities preschools and child care centers are supposed to provide. Most experts challenge those hard categories, since learning goes on in most homes, while some centers provide only custodial care.

The OLDCA has emerged to help their members give children the best of both day care scenarios. OLDCA operates training seminars to teach family day care operators how to maximize the learning possibilities for children in their homes. Using the High/Scope Foundation's curriculum designed for family day care, the association shows how to facilitate pre-reading skills by labelling household objects and develop language through story telling, how to set up their homes with learning corners, play areas and spaces for quiet work, and how to let children choose their own activities, within guidelines.

The training seminars have been so popular that OLDCA has had to turn people

away, says director Ruby Brunson. To Brunson, enthusiastic provider response to the High/Scope seminars and other training is testimony to the effectiveness and importance of provider associations. "Peer training works," Brunson told an Oakland forum on early childhood development last April. "Provider support works. We need to put time and money into helping associations like ours, because we have success."

OLDCA reaches beyond its membership by administering federal food subsidy funds to eligible child care providers. Wilson believes it could attract more involvement by expanding its efforts to provide provider respite services. "We really need relief workers," she says. "For one thing, it's a way to get more people into training and other activities. But it also lets us do the personal things we need to do. Forget about vacations – I haven't had one yet." For now, emotional satisfaction compensates for the lack of material rewards, such as the security of a regular salary and vacation time. But eventually, Wilson believes, organizations like OLDCA will earn their members the best of both worlds – the satisfaction *and* security that child development professionals deserve.

SECTION 6

How to change the odds: eight recommendations for expanding early childhood programs for Oakland's low-income families

Oakland is well-positioned to offer national leadership in developing a plan for expanding early childhood programs to reach all low-income children. As outlined in this report, the city has a wide range of programs serving poor children, a community of innovative administrators and advocates, and leadership committed to an all-out effort to "change the odds" for children at risk for persistent poverty.

The challenge for local leaders is threefold: to coordinate existing programs and better serve Oakland families; to tailor new programs, especially in the area of child care and welfare reform, to serve most effectively those at risk for long-term poverty; and to advocate convincingly for new and expanded programs based on well-documented need and solid knowledge of what will make a real difference.

The following eight recommendations represent a blueprint for coordinating, tailoring and expanding Oakland's child development programs to serve the Oakland families who so critically need them.

1. The City should establish an Oakland Opportunities for Children Committee, to facilitate the expansion of existing child development programs serving low-income children and to ensure that these programs have the capacity to provide comprehensive family support services.

Currently, no mechanism exists to bring together representatives of the many programs serving low-income Oakland preschoolers. The Committee, which ideally would be funded by both the city and county, would consist of members of the Working Group for the Oakland Early Childhood Development Initiative, county and city health and social service officials, and other key representatives from appropriate departments of government. The Committee would:

- Foster coordination among child development providers, bringing together program administrators serving low-income families to discuss common obstacles and concerns.

- Involve city and county officials responsible for a broad range of health, education and social services to low-income families, to coordinate a strategy to provide comprehensive services to children at risk for persistent poverty.

- Be provided staff that can help coordinate expansion, foster collaboration between providers, seek funding opportunities, write grant proposals and work with other city and county staff and department heads. They would be housed in the Office of Economic Development and Employment to facilitate close coordination with the City of Oakland's Child Care Commission and the Child Care Coordinator.

2. In planning for expansion, Oakland should build on the rich diversity of pro-

grams currently providing early childhood development services to low-income children.

Programs serving low-income children with local, state, federal and private sector funds include school-based centers, community-based non-profits, Head Start centers, family day care homes and private nursery schools. That diverse mix of programs is a bonus for Oakland children. It ensures that parents have some choice in what type of programs best meets their children's needs, and that children benefit from a wide range of child development expertise and experience.

3. Oakland's Head Start programs must be equipped to face the 1990s, with new federal, state and local resources for expansion.

As the national child development program with a track record of success serving low-income children, Head Start is central to a local early childhood initiative. The following proposals would improve the ability of Oakland's Head Start programs to offer more children its quality child development and family support services:

- **Full-day services.** Head Start programs should provide full-day services, so that working poor families who need child care, along with parents seeking work or training, can more easily place their children in Head Start. While benefiting working parents, full-day programs also offer the advantage of integrating Head Start economically, providing links between working parents and those who are not working and lessening the isolation of low-income parents who are out of the labor market – currently the majority of Head Start parents.

- **Outreach.** While some Head Start sites have waiting lists, other programs have vacancies, according to Oakland Head Start administrators. Traditional outreach methods are not working as well on the changing population of ever-younger single mothers and their children. Special methods must be developed to target homeless families with children, mothers who gave birth as teens, as well as the grandmothers and great-grandmothers who have primary caretaking responsibility for many Oakland children. City officials and Head Start administrators, in conjunction with the Oakland Opportunities for Children Committee, should develop a targeted outreach plan to overcome the special barriers to participation among many Head Start eligible families.

- **Expansion.** The program merits expansion, since in Oakland it currently serves only one in twelve eligible three- to five-year-olds, compared with the one in five it serves nationally. Head Start administrators should consider lowering the age of eligibility for Head Start or expanding its Parent Child Center program, which serves children age six weeks to three years. Experts agree that reaching families early is the best way to tie them into community resources, and to ensure that more children attend the traditional Head Start program at age three.

- **Local and state support.** Head Start programs must be given the local support they need to seek federal expansion funds, and local and state revenues should supplement those federal efforts. City resources, for instance, could be used to assist the program in finding crucial expansion sites, or to provide technical assistance in grantwriting and other expansion efforts. There is room for state assistance as well. Eight states and the District of Columbia currently supplement federal Head Start funding with their own resources.

- **Coordination.** A study by the federal Administration for Children, Youth and Families found that a lack of coordination with local child development programs could

hamper Head Start's effectiveness in serving its target population, while smooth coordination improves it. Cooperative projects between Head Start and other local child development programs can spread Head Start resources farther and provide children with the best of both models. Two models for replication are the recent joint ventures between the City of Oakland Head Start program and two state-subsidized child development programs, the Parent Child Development Centers, Inc., and the Oakland Unified School District's Hintil Kuu Ca Child Development Center. The programs have collaborated to share a site, enabling each to benefit from the other's resources and expertise and, significantly, combining to provide a full-day program for children and families.

4. The Oakland Unified School District must recognize the importance of its child development programs, and develop a plan to coordinate the programs within the District, and with other local child development and family service resources.

More than two-thirds of all children receiving state-subsidized child development services are enrolled in Oakland Unified School District programs. The District's Child Development Centers, State Preschool Programs and Adult Day School child development services make an enormous difference in the lives of Oakland children, but they are subject to changes in state and local funding and political commitments. The District must recognize the programs as a crucial school readiness resource, and coordinate them with overall planning for the primary grades **without pushing academic content into the preschool years.** The following proposals would help work the school district programs into an overall child development, family support and school readiness strategy for Oakland:

- **Restore comprehensive services.** Inadequate state funding has hampered the ability of school district programs to provide the family support and outreach they once were able to offer. The State Preschool program, for instance, no longer has the services of nurses or psychologists, once a critical family support resource for the program. State and local government funds, along with private sector support, are needed to rebuild the programs' capacity to offer the comprehensive parent and child education, health and social services central to improving the prospects of children at risk for persistent poverty.

- **Strengthen parent involvement efforts.** All of the District's child development programs have parent involvement components, but staff shortages, funding cuts and the difficulty of mounting a meaningful parent involvement program have meant that in reality, there is little ongoing parent involvement in most District programs. The District must revitalize its parent involvement efforts, funding staff time to plan and implement a strategy to reach more parents with substantive involvement in their children's programs as well as parenting classes and other services low-income parents critically need.

- **Coordination.** The State Preschool program and Child Development Centers should be viewed as a crucial school readiness resource for district children. District planning should have a Preschool-12 overview, rather than its current K-12 focus. Coordination and cooperation between Preschool, Child Development and Kindergarten teachers must be maximized. The District should consider giving one person responsibility for coordinating both the Preschool and Child Development programs. At one or two elementary school sites with both a State Preschool and Child Development Center, the District should experiment

with serving three- and four-year-olds from both programs together. That could provide for some administrative and supply savings while maximizing communication between preschool and child development teachers.

• **School readiness pilot project.** The District should seek funds for a pilot project implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on School Readiness at one or two low-achieving elementary schools. Specifically, such a project would seek to serve more four-year-olds in preschool programs, would reduce class size in kindergarten and first grade, and would establish a learning continuum from ages four to six. Such a model was also proposed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in its report "An Imperiled Generation: Saving Urban Schools." The Pasadena Unified School District recently announced its plan to begin implementing the Task Force's recommendations by serving four-year-olds with a combination of public and private funding.

• **School-based child care for teen parents.** Numerous studies have shown that school-based child care is a critical factor in enabling teen parents to stay in school and earn a diploma. While the nearby cities of Alameda, Hayward and Fremont all have school-based child care programs for teens, Oakland – which has the county's leading teen-birth rate – has no such program. The School District should seek public and private funds to begin a school-based program for teens.

• **Serve more children with disabilities, in mainstream settings where possible.** The District's effort to mainstream children with exceptional needs at two state preschool sites should be applauded. That model should guide District policy when implementing expanded programs for exceptional preschoolers, mandated by the state in AB 2666 last year.

5. Oakland must expand the capacity of private subsidized and private proprietary programs to serve low-income children and families.

Most of the state-subsidized child development programs run by non-profit organizations and family day care homes are providing a high-quality child development experience for children in their care. But their ability to provide the health, social services and parent support crucial to supporting low-income families is hampered by inadequate funding. Likewise, private proprietary programs that serve low-income children often do not have connection to the other social and support service programs such children need. The private programs should be supported by:

• **Family support teams.** The programs should be linked by a network of roving teams of family support professionals. The teams would visit individual centers and homes, as requested, on a regularly scheduled basis, to provide parents and children with physical and mental health services, social service referrals and specialized child development expertise. Contra Costa County has roving teams of child development and mental health specialists, available to consult with center and family day care home professionals on the needs of children in their care. San Francisco County is in the planning stage of a similar project.

• **Child Development Resource Centers.** In designated low-income neighborhoods, funding should be sought to establish Child Development Resource Centers. They would be specially designed to serve family day care associations and networks, providing office space, a place for provider training, parenting classes, a site for family dinners and special

events, and a range of other activities. The Resource Centers could also provide substitute day care home workers, a critical need to allow day care home operators to attend to professional and personal needs. They might also house the family support teams. Efforts should be made to build upon existing institutions with expertise in providing similar services, such as a local, high-profile child development program, the offices of an existing family day care network, or a school, as proposed by Head Start founder Dr. Edward Zigler as a model for "The School of the 21st Century."

• **Staff training and retention efforts.** Local child development training resources have eroded in recent years, with Bay Area community colleges and universities offering fewer courses for child development professionals. Public and private sector funds must go toward establishing more training resources, since it takes well-trained professionals to deal with the often multi-layered problems of low-income, at-risk families. Training staff to serve children with disabilities is a growing need in Oakland. Adequate compensation is equally important, to allow programs to retain experienced child development professionals, who are often paid near-poverty wages themselves. Public subsidies for child development programs should be calculated to ensure that programs can adequately compensate their staff.

6. **With a combination of public and private funding, local health, education and social service agencies should be pulled together to establish an "Oakland Birth-to-School Project," along the lines of the Chicago-based Beethoven Project.**

Oakland should establish a pilot project in a high-risk geographic area to provide a comprehensive, birth to kindergarten continuum of parent and child education and social services. The project's centerpiece should be an early childhood development program, with a major health component that starts with prenatal care for pregnant mothers and particularly targets pregnant teens. It would be modeled after the nationally renowned Beethoven Project in Chicago, designed to promote family stability and school readiness for future students of the Beethoven Elementary School, which serves Chicago's poorest children.

7. When possible, child care funds connected with the GAIN program and other adult training efforts should be channeled to high-quality, licensed child development programs.

The Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) welfare to work program is an important new source of child care funding for parents who rely on welfare. While most participants will be mothers of school-age children, a subgroup will be voluntary participants who have preschool-age children. Parents may choose to have the state pay fees at licensed child development programs, or they may have family members or friends paid to provide child care services. Other adult education and job training programs also may provide child care funds. While respecting the need for parental choice, we must find ways to encourage parents to use high-quality, licensed child development programs:

• **GAIN Family Support Centers.** A pilot Family Support Center should be established in a high-density AFDC neighborhood, using a variety of funding sources including GAIN to provide comprehensive family services to GAIN participants. The center would offer high-quality child care and development programs for children of GAIN participants, as well as counseling, peer support groups and other services needed by welfare recipients trying to make the transition to paid employment. One target popula-

tion would be teen mothers, who need a comprehensive range of services to continue their education and be effective parents. The center could also provide support services for family day care homes as well as family members caring for GAIN participants' children. If possible, it should be housed in a community institution with a track record of service to low-income, AFDC-reliant families.

• **Link GAIN volunteers with the Head Start and State Preschool programs.** Some GAIN parents could have their child care needs met by Head Start and State Preschool programs, perhaps in conjunction with family day care homes or other extended day services if full-day child care is needed. County GAIN officials and Head Start and State Preschool administrators should investigate the feasibility of such links.

• **Link job training and adult education services with child development programs.** Public and private programs offering adult training services know that one barrier to participation among single parents is a lack of adequate care for their children. Programs that currently provide child care funding should encourage the use of high-quality services. Programs without an existing child care component should explore linking to a local child development center, subsidizing extra slots for participant's children. Alternatively these programs could establish an onsite child development program, along the lines of The Family School serving low-income mothers and their children in San Francisco.

8. Local government officials and community advocates must push for federal and state legislation that enhances our ability to provide a high-quality early childhood development experience to every child in Oakland who needs it.

Clearly one city alone cannot untie the knot of problems that come together to keep families and children in poverty. Oakland needs more federal and state resources to keep pace with the growing educational and social service needs of its residents. The following would help Oakland offer early childhood development services to more city children:

• **Federal Head Start expansion.** While Head Start nationally serves a higher percentage of eligible children than it does in Oakland, it still serves fewer than 20 percent. The program should be gradually expanded to reach its full target population by the year 2000.

• **Increased federal child care support.** There is a growing constituency in Congress for major federal child care legislation. The Act for Better Child Care (ABC) bill is the most comprehensive of the many current proposals, providing $2.5 billion in child care subsidies to the states.

• **Expanded state child care subsidies.** State-subsidized child development programs serve fewer than 1 in 10 children eligible for subsidized services. Growth in program funding has been minimal in recent years, due in part to political squabbling over the cost and quality of the state-subsidized services. State-funded child development programs should receive an automatic, statutory cost-of-living-adjustment as K-12 programs do. They should also be state-mandated rather than categorical programs, which would provide them greater credibility and funding stability. The state should strive to reach at least half of all eligible children with services by the year 2000.

• **Local, state and federal welfare reform efforts that fully fund participants' child care needs.** Vigilance is essential to ensure

that the GAIN program adequately funds child care services. It is shortsighted to try to break the cycle of poverty by encouraging women to work, without providing their children with a consistent high-quality child development experience that can improve their social and educational expectations.

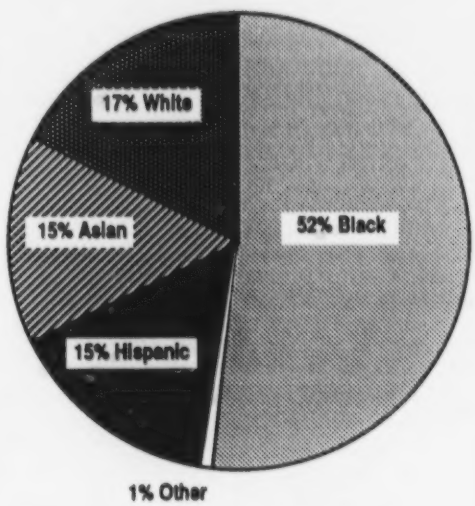
APPENDIX 1
Methodology

Acquiring accurate population estimates at the end of the 10-year census cycle is difficult. This report relies on Oakland birth data from 1983 through 1986 collected by the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency to arrive at an estimate of 26,500 Oakland children ages two through five. (Table 7 shows births by ethnicity for 1986.) The figure has been adjusted to account for death and outmigration, based on traditional differences between birth data and actual school enrollment in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Nevertheless, it reflects a 50 percent increase in the number of Oakland two-through five-year-olds since 1980.

Accurate poverty data was more difficult to come by. We used two different measures to reach an estimate of 12,000 Oakland two-through five-year-olds in poverty. The first estimate assumed that the rise in the poverty rate among Oakland's under-six population matched the rise in the under-six poverty rate statewide. Poverty among California children under six increased 38 percent between 1980 and 1985, the most recent year for which accurate data could be obtained. Assuming the poverty rate of Oakland's under-six population also increased 38 percent, almost 45 percent of Oakland's young children would live in poverty. That adds up to over 11,700 of the city's 26,500 two- through five-year-olds.

We reached a similar, slightly higher poverty estimate using data on welfare recipiency among Oakland children. The 1980 census reported that 5,400 Oakland two-through five-year olds relied on public assistance (as distinct from Social Security), which for children is synonymous with Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Poverty, however, is not synonymous with AFDC recipiency, or vice versa. In 1980, only 56 percent of two-through five-year-olds in poverty received AFDC, according to census data. And of those children the census records as receiving AFDC, 40 percent were lifted out of poverty by receiving AFDC, so that they are not counted by the census as living below the poverty line. Nonetheless, the number of two -through five-year-olds living in poverty was close to the number on public assistance – approxi-

Table 7: 1986 births by ethnicity



Source: Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

mately 5,740, or 6 percent more than those receiving AFDC.

This report assumes that the relationship between the number of children on AFDC and the number living below the poverty line is the same as it was in 1980, that is, that there are 6 percent more two- through five-year-olds in poverty than on AFDC. In 1987, the Alameda County Social Services Agency reported that an estimated 11,500 Oakland two- through five-year-olds received AFDC, leading to a poverty estimate of 12,190. That has been rounded off to 12,000 in this report. It may be a conservative estimate, since among Oakland's fastest-growing poor neighborhoods are many with low rates of AFDC recipiency, especially those with high numbers of recent Asian and Hispanic immigrants.

From those numbers, the report extrapolates eligibility rates for publicly-subsidized child development programs. For Head Start and State Preschool programs, which are the only programs eligible to serve AFDC parents who are not working or in training, the report uses AFDC recipiency as a stand-in for eligibility. There are an estimated 8,625 three- to five-year-olds receiving AFDC in Oakland. The city's two Head Start contractors can serve just under 700 of them, for a ratio of children eligible to children served of about 12-1. Adding in the approximately 550 served by State Preschool, there are 1,250 spaces for 8,625 children, or a 7-to-1 ratio. (Since there are many poor children who do not receive AFDC, this estimate is conservative.)

Establishing eligibility estimates for state-subsidized child development programs is more difficult. Families with incomes of up to 84 percent of the median income are eligible for some level of subsidy – or $25,900 for a family of four – but census data does not reflect how many families fall below that line. As a substitute eligibility level, this report uses 200 percent of the poverty line. At under $23,000 for a family of four, that is actually below 84 percent of the median income, but it is the highest income level for which population estimates could be reliably obtained.

The 1980 census found that 56 percent of Oakland's two- through five-year-olds lived in families with incomes less than 200 percent of the poverty line. Of the approximately 9,500 two- through five-year-olds with family incomes below 200 percent of the poverty line in 1980, 5,740 – or 60 percent – lived below the poverty line. Assuming that two- through five-year-olds with family incomes below the poverty line still make up 60 percent of those living below twice the poverty line, with an estimated 12,000 living in poverty today, approximately 20,000 live below twice the poverty line and are eligible for state-subsidized child development services. **Again, this represents a very conservative estimate, since 84 percent of the state's median family income is higher than 200 percent of the poverty line.**

Not counting Head Start programs, which are federally funded, there are just over 3,000 state-subsidized child development slots for at least 20,000 two- through five-year-olds in Oakland. That adds up to an eligible-to-served ratio of almost seven children for every child development slot. Adding Head Start, the ratio is 5 1/2-to-1.

APPENDIX 2
Subsidies and other funding

Much of what has been recommended in this report to improve early childhood development opportunities for Oakland's children at risk for persistent poverty can be accomplished through better coordination and targetting of resources. The greatest impact, however, will come from expanding current programs and developing new ones. This can be accomplished only with more money. This section describes current subsidies and other funding, to establish benchmarks for expansion.

There is a healthy diversity of revenue sources (if inadequate revenue amounts) available to child care and development programs. Individual programs also rely on diverse arrays of funding. For instance, a family day care provider might receive only parent fees; the Oakland Unified School District uses at least 11 revenue sources for its preschool-aged programs, and provides in-kind resources as well; and one private, non-profit center mixes 12 revenue sources.

This mixing is frequently necessary for programs to continue to function. State subsidies are not adequate to fund any of the center-based programs.

Most low-income families can use good quality child care and development services only with some form of subsidy. In California, and in Oakland, the State Department of Education provides the largest amounts and numbers of subsidies. The federal government plays a significant role, with the county, city and foundations also contributing.

A reasonable per-child subsidy to expand programs based on a survey of local program costs is $4100 per year. This is slightly higher than the national figure of $4000 per child annually developed by economist W. Norton Grubb for the Committee for Economic Development.

Total subsidies funding Oakland's child care and development programs for preschool-age, low-income children are summarized in Table 8. The amounts shown are estimates for the two- to five-year age cate-

TABLE 8
Preschool-age child care and development subsidies used in Oakland, 1987-88

State Dept. of Education Funding	
1. General, Public	7,105,962
2. General, Private	2,615,068
3. Alternative Payment	676,006
4. Campus	344,572
5. Child Protective Services Day Care	135,750
6. Rent Subsidies	43,230
7. State Preschool	1,335,104
	$12,255,692
Local Funding	
8. United Way	254,254
9. Alameda County "Maintenance of Effort"	82,135
	$336,389
Federal Funding	
10. Community Development Block Grants	92,618
11. Job Training Partnership Act	79,328
12. Head Start, City of Oakland	1,710,218
13. Head Start, Oak. Parent/Child	890,955
	$2,773,119
TOTAL SUBSIDIES	**$15,365,200**

gory, and pertain only to programs in Oakland which provide routine, daily care for non-disabled children.[1] Funding category names are those used by the State Department of Education, and their meanings are described in the following text.

Table 8 shows categories of funding organized by source. Each category has its own rationale, history and character for Oakland. These are described in the following section.

Description of funding by category

State Department of Education Funding

1. General, Public

The largest funding category statewide, it is also the largest in Oakland, and goes exclusively to the Oakland Unified School District's Child Development Center program. The CDC program provides a structured environment for preschoolers and children in kindergarten through third grade. CDCs can provide a full-day program; their hours run from about 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

The funding amount given in Table 8 includes the Child Food Program monies and in-kind services (mostly rent and insurance) from the District.

2. General, Private

Eleven private, non-profit centers are funded in Oakland with this money. They provide structured experiences for infants and school-age children as well as preschoolers.

For non-profit, center-based programs, State program subsidies account for only 80-90% of their budgets: these centers had to raise about $400,000 to complete their budgets. This funding typically comes from parent fees and additional fundraising.

Like CDC's, non-profit centers can provide full-day care, from early in the morning until parents can pick up the child after work.

3. Alternative Payment

Two Resource and Referral, two family day care associations and one association of for-profit centers distribute AP funds to Oakland providers of care. Eligible families select the center or home where they want their child to go, and the local AP payor pays the provider directly.

The Alternative Payment program is the main state subsidy for family day care homes. Many homes offer not only full-day care, but after-hours care as well, which is particularly attractive to the parent who works non-standard hours.

4. Campus

For students enrolled at their campuses, the Peralta Community Colleges provide some child care and development services. Student parents must meet the standard state eligibility guidelines.

5. Child Protective Services Day Care

This program was designed to place children in programs when a welfare worker determines it would be in the child's best interests, either to remediate a negative home environment, or to prevent abuse or neglect. This Day Care funding is differentiated from Respite Care, which is used in emergency situations for periods not to exceed 48 hours.

Family day care placements are paid for only until a slot opens at a state-subsidized center. Children identified for CPS take priority over other children on the center's waiting list. Families using this program need only be at-risk, and need not meet financial eligibility guidelines. The money is administered through the Social Services Department of the County.

6. Rent Subsidies

The rent subsidy is available only to those

sites that got it when it initially began about 10 years ago. A small pool of rent subsidy money for non-profit centers is distributed by SDE to 26 sites statewide on an annual basis. The money comes to a fixed number of programs. In Oakland, there are five sites that receive it.

7. State Preschool

Two non-profit centers and the Oakland Unified School District have State Preschool programs. OUSD's program receives about 90% of the funding shown.

At the OUSD sites, children in the State Preschool have a structured half-day program. At the private sites, additional funding may be used to add to the half-day program, so that the child may be cared for on a full-day basis.

Local funding

8. United Way

United Way makes grants to member agencies that provide child care and development programs, for general operating expenses. The exact amount of United Way participation in child care programs is difficult to assess, because it also gives grants to multi-service agencies, one of whose functions might be child care.

Five agencies in Oakland which provide primarily child care with their United Way funds got money in 1987-88.

9. Alameda County "Maintenance of Effort"

In 1972, some counties were funding center-based child care and development programs. That year, the state agreed to fund those programs and additional ones only if those counties maintained their current level of funding in perpetuity. Seven sites in Oakland currently can receive this county "maintenance of effort" funding. The money has the same regulations attached as regular SDE funds.

Federal funding

10. Community Development Block Grants

The city can spend up to 15% of its CDBG monies for "public services" that are not the renovation-type programs for which the bulk of CDBG was designed. The monies shown in line 10 are "public service" funds that are used for child care. The funds come from the CDBG allocations of several of the Community Development Districts, and are distributed in a voucher program similar to the Alternative Payment program.

11. Job Training Partnership Act

The city's JTPA program contracts with Bananas to distribute the JTPA child care monies in a manner similar to the Alternative Payment program. Only parents in job training programs are eligible, and only for the duration of their training.

12. & 13. Head Start

There are two separate Head Start programs in Oakland, one administered through the City of Oakland, and the other through the Oakland Parent Child Center.

Head Start is the prototype for the half-day, structured child development program for low-income families, with a strong parental involvement component. At Oakland Parent Child Center, the Head Start program is melded with several other parental and family involvement programs.

Head Start programs must show matching amounts of 25% of their budgets. In Oakland, these matching funds are composed mostly of parent volunteer hours valued for the purpose of the match, and are worth about $650,000. A significant part of the match to the City of Oakland Head Start program comes from in-kind donations, such as rent, from the city.

All three sources of funding categorized in the report contribute modest amounts to programs for children with disabling conditions. The City of Oakland's Head Start program receives specially-designated federal funding. Several non-profit groups receive state monies; and one center gets United Way funds for emotionally disturbed children. The total of all these funds is approximately $300,000.

Other contributions

Foundations

Not shown in Table 8 is the important funding given by local foundations to upgrade child care and development programs, mostly in Oakland. In 1987-88, the Clorox Company Foundation contributed about $80,000 and leveraged another $66,000 from other foundations toward training and other non-direct service help for Oakland child care programs. A significant amount of this $146,000 went to expand the number of infant care slots, and a good deal toward training new child care workers.

Child Care Food Program

These funds are distributed by the State Department of Education, to pay for balanced nutrition to children in home- and center-based care. Oakland programs are successful in obtaining between $700,000 and $800,000 annually in food monies for its subsidized preschoolers. Appropriate nutrition contributes greatly to all phases of the child's development.

Food Program monies going to the Oakland Unified School District's Child Development Center program are already included in line #1, the General, Public category.

Welfare Payment "Income Disregard"

If working parents receiving welfare are paying for child care, up to $160 per month of those costs can be "disregarded" from their salaries, in calculating their welfare grants. Their grants are a corresponding amount higher.

On an annual basis, Oakland residents who qualify for this income disregard receive an indirect subsidy to child care for their preschoolers of approximately $125,000 to $175,000 in state, federal and county funds.

Parent Fees

The parents of Oakland's low-income preschoolers participate with the school district, city government, local foundations and the state and federal governments in paying for early childhood care and development. This diversity, and partnership of payors, demonstrates a willingness to invest in the future of Oakland's children. Currently, that investment is not equal to the task of securing that future for all who need it.

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[1]Information obtained on funding pertained to **total** program budgets. For multi-age programs, these budgets needed to be recalculated to reflect amounts spent on preschoolers only.

Few administrators can give an accurate count of the number of preschoolers in a multi-age setting. Therefore, to estimate the numbers of preschoolers, statewide percentages for ages of children in subsidized programs were taken from the "Triennial Report on Publicly Funded Child Development Programs, 1985-86," by the California State Department of Education, 1988. These age percentages were applied to programs in Oakland.

Because infants, preschoolers, and school-age children each require different staffing patterns, their relative costs are different. To weight these differences, a ratio was used from "The Cost of State-Subsidized Child Care in California," by MPR Associates, 1986. By constructing an index that com-

bined the estimated percentages of preschoolers within programs with the weighting ratios, a dollar amount reflecting the cost of preschoolers was established.

Another $396,600 is spent in Oakland by the State Department of Education on programs which do not provide routine child care or development for preschoolers, but which should be mentioned as important parts of the overall picture. These programs include ones for respite care, child care for hospital patients' visitors, "latchkey" programs, and the local resource and referral program.

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